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Truth on Trial : Speaking
Truth to Power



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PEACE

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The goals of INEB are to:

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

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Revival of Buddhism's Heart in Laos On the Occasion of the Centennial Anniversary of Venerable Maha Pan Anandho 25 October 2010

Buddhism in Laos, the land of a million elephants, gradually declined since the conquest of Laos by Siam (Thailand) and its subsequent colonisation by France over 100 years ago. This decline continued until the Buddhist Scholars Council was established in 1928 by a group of intellectuals, led by Prince Petcharaj, which is regarded as the starting point for the restoration and strengthening of Laotian society, as well as assisting the process of gaining independence from France. Meanwhile, Buddhism was also given support during that time, and monks and novices were given chances to study the dhamma and the Pali language. One of these monks was Venerable Maha Pan Anandho who studied Buddhism until he graduated to level 6 and he realized that the core of teaching is to apply the principles of the teaching in practice. This realization is a turning point that affected his whole life. Later, he acted as the Great Master to restore Buddhism in Laos, and especially to restore the guidelines for the foundation of a strong meditation practice. There has been a vast expansion of meditation centers throughout Laos up until now.

Maha Pan received meditation guidelines from Mahathat Monastery in Bangkok in 1952 which was at the time when dhamma education had been promoted by Venerable Vimaladhamma (Ard Asabho). Also, a group of monks from Burma were invited to help set up the foundation of Abhidhamma and meditation practice. Later in Laos, this practice was called "motion – still", with its core based on Satitpathana (foundation of mindfulness). It was regarded as an effective method and the practice was taught extensively throughout Laos and Thailand by Venerable Thien Jittasupo. This great master monk who had studied and practiced with Venerable Maha Pan in Nongkai province was able to apply the practice guidelines which greatly affected his life.

The work of Venerable Maha Pan is quite extensive in every aspect. Over 11 years between 1957-1968, he set up Maha Bhuddavongsa Pa Luang Monastery or Sok Pa Luang Monastery in Vientiane province as a meditation center for laypersons interested in dhamma study and practice. He was committed and quite strict in teaching his students, who included monks, novices and nuns, requiring them to be able to study and practice dhamma continuously. Meanwhile, dhamma preaching and dhamma talks were set up every Sunday in order to give a chance for students to learn from each other. Moreover, those who had good potential were also promoted to study abroad and later came back to work as Buddhist leaders and to help setting up 20 meditation centers throughout Laos. Further, he also focused on training the younger generation, and the "Buddhist Youth", so Moral Training Centers were set up in 5 schools around the capital city. From them, there were some youths who came to study and practice dhamma and helped to spread it as well. In addition, a bi-monthly magazine called *Buddhavong*, was published for 9 years, and was regarded as a forum for any intellectual and dhamma communication to be disseminated. On the other hand, all the key supporters and activists of the movement were driven by the group of former scholars from Buddhist Graduates Council in Vientiane, which was closed earlier due to the political movement.

It was quite sad that Venerable Maha Pan died at the age of 58 in 1968, the year that Laos was in a civil war. Finally, the Communist Party won and declared the country as the People's Republic of Laos. Since that time, Buddhism was banned for almost 20 years until the country was re-opened in 1985. All his students, led by Venerable Salee Kantasillo, vice president of Laos Sangha and chairman of meditation practice promotion unit, have restored and revived Buddhism. He has also focused on meditation practice in continuation of the work of his teacher, Venerable Maha Pan. Later, Buddhist practice expanded to involve more social work. One outcome is the project, 'Buddhism for Development', which was set up in 2003 as the Buddhist Movement for Social Work and which has played an important role in society and is widely recognized.

Pornchai Borriboontrakul

Editorial Notes

The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded annually in Oslo. Sometimes it went to the right person and sometimes it went to the wrong person—depending on whose perspective. When the Dalai Lama received the prize in 1989, the Chinese government was furious. The same happened to the Burmese government when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the award in 1991.

On October 8, 2010 Liu Xiaobo became the first Chinese to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. The Oslo committee had already received a warning from Beijing not to give Liu the prize because he was a “criminal” who is serving eleven years in prison for “subversion of state power.” After Oslo made its announcement, Beijing labeled the award an “obscenity.” By Beijing’s standards it certainly is. Charter 08, a document that Liu helped write—and that was published in English for the first time in the January 15, 2009, issue of *The New York Review of books*—was soon signed by ten thousand Chinese. It demanded that

We should make freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and academic freedom universal, thereby guaranteeing that citizens can be informed and can exercise their right of political supervision. These freedoms should be upheld by a Press Law that abolishes political restrictions on the press. The provision in the current Criminal Law that refers to “the crime of incitement to subvert state power” must be abolished. We should end the practice of viewing words as crimes.

The petition also said, “We must abolish the special privilege of one party to monopolize power and must guarantee principles of free and fair competition among political parties.”

In Siam, the law of *lese majeste* is also regarded as ‘the crime of incitement to subvert state power’. In *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason and Lese Majeste* David Streckfuss states that during the past five decades, the charges on *lese majeste* were less than one case per annum and then it increased to be five cases annually, but in 2009 there were 164 cases, 82 of which are now pending at the criminal court. The charge for each case is between 3 to 15 years imprisonment. Streckfuss also states that “with the state of exception extended indefinitely, Thailand has fallen out of historical time and entered, with a captured and tortured truth, an eternal abnormal time. For more than a century now, truth has been on trial in Thailand. It has come time for us to judge its proceeding.”

Likewise, truth is on trial in China and in many other countries. But once truth prevails and people adhere to the power of truth and nonviolence, no state power or any mighty empire can oppose these forces which seem to be gentle as well as most powerful. The British Empire, on which at that time the Sun never set, was defeated by *Satyagraha* and *Ashimsa* led by “a half naked fakir”, who did not even receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1995 when the editor of this journal was acquitted from the case of *lese majeste* brought against him by the strong leader of the 1991 *coup d'état* (the case lasted four years) he received the so-called Alternative Nobel in the Swedish Parliament at the end of that year.

In the last four years, there were three cases of *lese majeste* against him and they all came to an end in August 2010. There was no official announcement of any sort. Yet the Attorney General informed the editor verbally that his office will not bring any *lese majeste* charge against him to the criminal court. Hence the editor wishes to thank all his well wishers, many who are readers or subscribers to this journal, who were active in petitioning the Royal Secretariat, the Prime Minister etc., to drop the cases against the editor.

Legally, the editor is a free man. Let us hope that he will not be like Liu Xiaobo, who said after his release from prison in 1991, “I hope to be a sincere Chinese intellectual and writer. This can put me back in prison—which is what happens to people like me in China.” It is indeed words that have put him back behind the bars.

We shall see whether or not the editor will still be an intellectual and writer. Will he compromise with the powers-that-be? Or will the powers-that-be be enlightened to see that truth and nonviolence are more essential than the half-truths, hypocrisies, and formalities of the pseudo-feudalism at home and imperialism and neocolonialism abroad.

Burma: To President Obama

1st November 2010

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As you know, the upcoming elections in Burma, scheduled for November 7 cannot be legitimate without participation of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD is boycotting this sham process because the Burmese military regime has designed electoral laws that insure that a rigged and non-representative election will transpire precluding the participation of Burma's 2100 political prisoners and other democracy supporters. As leaders in the Western Buddhist community, we implore you to repudiate the results of this upcoming election.

We appreciate your Administration's support for a Commission of Inquiry. We urge the U.S. government to exercise all diplomatic means to call the Burmese junta to account for allegations concerning crimes against humanity perpetrated against ethnic nationalities.

It is essential that the international community witness your clear and unwavering support for the freedom of the Burmese people at this pivotal time in their history.

We thank you in advance for your care and wisdom in responding to this urgent request and we look forward to your reply.

Respectfully submitted,
Signed by 104 leading Western Buddhists

India: Ambedkar's Conversion Celebrated at Nagaloka

Last week saw celebrations across India marking the 54th anniversary of the conversion to Buddhism by Dr Ambedkar at Nagpur on 14th October 1956. Manidhamma writes with news from Nagaloka, Triratna's training centre in central India, just a few miles from the 'Diksha Bhumi', or 'Ground of Conversion'. He says,

"Thousands of people from various states of India and abroad gathered at Nagaloka on 17th October at 10.30am to celebrate the 54th anniversary of the Great Mass Conversion to Buddhism by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.



The Big Buddha at Nagaloka.

The event was organised by Triratna's Nagarjuna Training Institute at its beautiful Nagaloka campus.

"For the first time, the celebrations took place adjacent to the 56-foot tall walking Buddha statue, which was inaugurated last December. Harsha Nava-

ratne, President of the Sevalanka Foundation from Sri Lanka, Mr Somboon Chungprampree (Moo) from the International Network of Engaged Buddhists in Thailand and Savi Savarkar, a well-known artist from New Delhi were chief guests on the occasion, and Dharmachari Lokamitra presided over the celebration. Vivekaratna gave introduction to the Dharmaduta Training Course at the Nagarjuna Training Institute and Maitrivir-Nagarjuna from Delhi translated the talks into Hindi.

"A seminar was conducted on the second day on 'the image



of the Buddha', with Manidhamma giving a multimedia

presentation on the evolution, history and symbolism of the image of the Buddha and how to appreciate the arts. This was followed by Maitrivir-Nagarjuna who gave a talk on Art and Aesthetics in the life of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, and Savi Savarkar, who did a presentation on his own art.

"In the beginning guests were welcomed by music and beautiful singing and chanting from Pali. Maitreyanath did the vote of thanks. In the evening all the students and guests visited the Deekshabhoomi and offered their respects to the relics of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar".

Sadhu!

Manidhamma



Laos: Chao Anouvong Statue Graces New Park

A bronze statue of Chao Anouvong was installed yesterday at a park named in his honour before being officially unveiled at a ceremony this Sunday.

After a 3 hour operation the statue was eventually erected on its base at 5pm in front of a large crowd eager to catch a glimpse of the dramatic figure.

The statue was transported to the park on Monday night before technicians used three cranes to mount the 10 tonne structure on its base alongside the Mekong.

Onlookers cheered as the statue stood on its own for the first time, with both Lao and foreigners interested in seeing the likeness of the brave king of the Lan Xang Kingdom.

Atop the 8 metre high



The statue's face will remain hidden until the official unveiling this Sunday. -Photo Khamphan

statue, the face of the king remains hidden by a cloth before being fully revealed at the official ordination ceremony.

The statue faces the Mekong in a westerly direction, with the king's left hand holding a sword as the right hand gestures forward to symbolise the urging on of Lao troops.

The king's belt features

naga images which represent peace and morality, core philosophies of the ruler's reign.

The official ceremony on November 7 will start at 4pm and run until 7am the following day.

The ordination ceremony will be held in line with Buddhist customs and there will also be cultural performances in the evening to celebrate the opening of the riverside park.

Chao Anouvong was the last king of the Vientiane monarchy, reigning in the Lao Lan Xang capital from 1804 to 1828. He proved to be one of the bravest kings in Lao history, fighting against Siamese dominance without surrender from 1826-1828.

Phonesavanh Sangsomboun



Malaysia: A Reflection on Buddhism : Freedom and the ISA (Internal Security Act)

The political events over the year in Malaysia has create much uncertainty. Compounded by economic uncertainty arising

fallout of large financial institutions, gives more reasons for concerns. Amidst all this, what is most fearful in the heart

of many Malaysian is the unstable political environment. What concerns and upsets most is the manner so-called dissidents and

oppositions are dealt with. In particular, the detention without trial — selected individuals accused of being threats to the peace of the nation. Their detention is known as Section 73(1) Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960. This act states that:

“Any police officer may without warrant arrest and detain pending enquiries any person in respect of whom he has reason to believe that there are grounds which would justify his detention under section 8; and that he has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any part thereof or to maintenance of essential services therein or to the economic life thereof.”

Further in Section 8 ISA: Power to order detention or restriction of persons.

“(i) If the Minister is satisfied that the detention of any person is necessary with a view to preventing him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any part thereof or to the maintenance of essential services therein or the economic life thereof, he may make an order (hereinafter referred to as a detention order) directing that that person be detained for any period not exceeding two years.”

As of today there are 19 known detainees remaining in detention camp in Kemunting—not given a chance at all to defend themselves through due legal process. (A full list is available at <http://www.aliran.com/oldsite/monthly/2001/3e.htm>).

Some are alleged terrorists; some are accused of being spies while some are bloggers (have been released since). Some held for more than seven years with no freedom in sight.

I know many Buddhist friends are greatly aware of this topic of discussion. Many of my friends take these discussions to the coffee shops, or even at private corners of Buddhist temples. One thing we cannot deny is that this issue has a greater implication to our society as a whole. To most of us, it is much more than we want to know and to accept. Being a Buddhist, this Act represents a direct contradiction to the teachings and principles of the Buddha Dharma.

The overcoming of dukkha and the spirit of Siddhartha's Renunciation

As a Buddhist it pains me to see this dukkha inflicted unnecessarily to individuals. It pains me to see one of these detainee who did not get to see his daughter at her deathbed. With two daughters of my own, my heart cried to the story of Shahrial Sirin, detained for 7 years WITHOUT TRIAL under the ISA. The authorities delayed the decision to allow him to return to visit his daughter who was in coma at the Kajang Hospital. She died 3 1/2 hours after her father arrived. This is just one story. I asked myself, how can we continue to recite the following every week (daily in some cases). Yet continue to go on with life as if nothing is happening?

Jatipi dukkha jarapi dukkha maranampi dukkham Soka. parideva. dukkha domanas. supuyasapi dukkha

(Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, and death is suffering; Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are sufferings;)

Is this the thought Prince Siddhartha experienced when he saw the Four Sights that was so powerful that led him to leave the palace? Is it doing something

about the dukkha in line with the spirit of renunciation? If this is the spirit of renunciation of Siddhartha, how can we, as followers of the Buddha's teachings, sit and be quiet and continue to focus inward into our vipassana practices oblivious to what's happening outside. Did the Buddha not speak of compassion?

There is even a Pali word for it, it's "karunā". Karunā is one of the four "divine abodes" (brahmavihara), along with lovingkindness (metta), sympathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha). In the Pali Canon, the Buddha recommends cultivating these four virtuous mental states to both householders and the monastic. When one develops these four states, the Buddha advises radiating them in all directions, as in the following stock canonical phrase regarding karun:

“He keeps pervading the first direction as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth — with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, all around, everywhere in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.” Kālāmā Sutta (AN 3.65)

In the Pali commentaries Karunā is the desire to remove harm and suffering (ahita-dukkha-apanaya-kāmatā) from others (SN-A 128).

We should do what we can to show compassion now. Show the detainees (and their families) that the Buddhists do care.

Buddhism & the Overcoming of Fear

Why are we not expressing

our Karunā outwardly? I organized a Puja and Meditation for the ISA detainees and hardly a handful of people turned up! No big temples or Buddhist organizations have organized such Puja at the point of writing this reflection. I spoke to some Buddhist friends and two answers came out the most. The first is often, “I am not affected (so do not need to bother)”. I will talk more about this later. The more common response is “Aren’t you afraid that YOU might be arrested under the ISA too?” In other words, FEAR.

If Siddhartha feared for his life and feared the loss of his lifestyle, he would not have left the comfort of his palace. We would have NO Buddhism today! This article and magazine would not exist! The Buddha said that fear is an obstruction to the development of calm and insight. Let me share this article. Taken from a lecture entitled *The Psychology of Emotions in Buddhist Perspective* by Dr. Padmasiri de Silva:

Fear is often caused by strong desires (ta.nhaaya jaayati bhaya.m) [Dhp 216] Strong desires and attachment to either persons or things cause fear because if we cling to some precious and valuable object,... it is the same with the attachment to one's own self: a threat to one's life, sickness, the threat of losing one's job or reputation — all these situations are conditions for the emergence of fear. It is due to the strong self-preservative drive (bhavatanhaa) which in turn is fed by the bhavaraaga anusaya (the lurking tendency to crave for existence) that fear becomes such an agitating condition...

...Thus restlessness and worry blind one's vision of

oneself, and form an obstruction to the development of tranquility and insight. [AN 5.193]

Source: <http://www.accessinsight.org/lib/authors/desilva/wheel237.html>

We cannot stick our heads in the sand believing everything is okay, hiding in the thought that our private meditation practice is more important. This mindset is call delusion. We must strive to overcome FEAR. This fight however, is rooted in calmness of insight and meditation.

Buddha Dharma = Freedom

The Dharma that the Buddha discovered expounds several important principles beginning with freedom and the cessation of dukkha. The ultimate aim of Buddhism is to achieve absolute freedom from the cycle of life and death, this freedom is known as Nirvana or Nibbana. Achieving this means having the right conditions.

Hence, I personally feel that it is our right to speak up, support and provide some form of solidarity to people who have been detained under this Internal Security Act (ISA). We need to strive to create the right conditions for our practice now, we cannot wait for these conditions to appear. How can we truly practice when there is fear. Some have argued with me that, “Look we are free to practice and have our temples, why stir up problem?” My response is simple, this is called “being selfish” and against the teachings of the four Brahmaviharas.

We must do something. Making an effort is “karma”. Karma is not waiting for something to happen to us – and we decide if it is good or bad karma.

It is very clear that making an effort to change is a blessing.

The Buddha in the Maha-Mangala Sutta advised us that *Patirupadesavaso ca* (To dwell in a suitable locality is a supreme blessing). If any of our detainees are relatives, we will think and act differently—what if they are our relatives, brothers and sisters in this same house called Malaysia. We would do something for our relatives. In the same Sutta, the Buddha also advised that *Naata-kaana-n ca saéngaho*: Helping one’s relatives is a supreme blessing. Aren’t we all related in one way or another?

We do not help our relatives by taking to the streets and cause chaos, we just need to focus on our minds and send METTA to those who are detained—and to make it known that our Buddhist brothers and sisters are in support.

In the same way, we must not forget the people who signed the arrest orders including the people that executed the orders. They too need our METTA. There are no enemies according to the Buddha’s teachings – just people who have not seen certain wisdoms yet. In the *Maha-Mangala Sutta* as well, we are reminded of *Khanti*: Patience and *Tapo*: Energetic self-restraint. That’s the way we show, support and solidarity.

There is so much more to write about this as it is the topic right now. Suffice it to say that as Buddhists, we are also citizens of this country that want a country to be ruled by the rule of law and justice and there is a way to do it. This message is even more powerful in the Mahayana tradition, where a Bodhisattva vows:

I vow to liberate all beings, without number.

Let’s begin by looking at our own backyard in a place called Kamunting. In this place, people

are detained and held with no opportunity of justice bestowed upon them.

What we do now indeed affects our future, our children and their children. Doing something today is Pubbe ca katapu ~n~nataa: Having made merit in the past. What we do today is the past that affects our future. This

is the land where we and our children (and their children will be). Doing something can make a difference!

Lastly, I leave you with this prayer:

Evoking the presence of the great compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion - towards ourselves and towards

all living beings.

Let us pray that all living beings realise that they are all brothers and sisters, all nourished from the same source of life.

(Buddhist Prayer on World Peace Day, 2007)

Vidyanda

Siam:

Interview on Lese Majeste with David Streckfuss

Khon Kaen-based scholar David Streckfuss recently completed a seminal book on lese majeste law entitled *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason, and Lese Majeste* published by Routledge. He answered questions by Pravit Rojanaphruk about lese majeste law and more. Excerpts:

1) Many people who support lese majeste law say Thailand and its monarchy is unique thus the law is needed. What's your view?

The most obvious question to ask is: "If the Thai monarchy is so loved, why does it require one of the most draconian lese majeste laws of recent world history?" So yes, the institution may be quite unique, and so is the law protecting it. But in many cases, the law is in direct conflict with the democratic aspirations of many Thais. To believe something is unique tends towards a sense of exceptionalism, which easily leads towards becoming blinded to universal and historical trends elsewhere.

2) Some Thais claim foreigners do not and cannot really understand Thai society. Is your book yet another example of a portrayal of Thai society from a 'naive' outsider's perspective?

These days, I'm not so sure that anyone really understands what's going on in Thai society—Thai or foreigner. The discourse on Thailand and Thai-ness has drifted into terra incognita and as such perhaps no one has a privileged perspective any

more. As for the book, I think it does pretty well in appreciating and characterizing the historical roots of "Thai" perceptions of the truth. The conclusions the book draws are a descriptive analysis of this very "Thai" system confronting modern, largely universal legal norms and human rights discourse. I wouldn't argue that the book's perspective is "the right one." It is merely one perspective, but one that I hope will resonate for some who live in Thailand—both Thai and foreigner—and who sincerely want the best for this country and its people.

3) Many decades ago, Thai mainstream media used to report and write critically about the monarchy institution. Today, they exercise self-censorship on anything deemed even mildly critical without any qualm. How do you explain it?

There are a number of factors that might explain the change. One cause certainly is the increased penalty for lese majeste. After the 6th of Oct. massacre, the military dictatorship of the time increased the penalty to a minimum of three and a maximum of 15 years in jail for each count—a penalty that is more than twice as high as during the absolute monarchy. Most importantly perhaps is that since the early 1960s, much of the movement toward democracy was reversed and there was a re-sacralization of the institution. This shift made it increasingly difficult to address a whole series of political, social, economic, and cul-

tural issues, depriving Thailand of much of the artistic and intellectual dynamism it might otherwise have had. The chilling effect of this law on the media is undeniable. But the mainstream media seems to have also failed in fulfilling its historical task of fighting for greater freedom of expression.

The German press in the 1890s, for instance, showed a remarkable feistiness at a time when there were more than 500 cases of lese majeste on average per year. A number of newspaper editors would be jailed for a year or two, be released for a few days, challenge the law again, and be thrown right back into jail. Sometimes it is said that government repression in Thailand is understandable given that Thailand has been democratic for only 80 years. German democracy in the 1890s was even younger, and yet the media showed its verve.

Thailand cannot claim to be democratic while at the same time arresting and trying hundreds of people for freedom of expression. It might be clearer were Thailand to emulate Myanmar, ignore international human rights standards completely, and simply say that "Thai-style democracy" is one where the military can act with wanton impunity, freedom of expression on certain key issues is non-existent, and amnesties conveniently expunge the past.

4) Why Thai society doesn't seem to be able to come to a consensus over lese majeste law?

In the 1970s, the right tore Thai society apart by accusing its opponents of being “communists” or “communist terrorists.” Now the ultimate act of treason is republicanism or even not showing absolute loyalty to the highest institution. Today’s Thai conservatives are too eager to bundle together republicanism, those who want to reform the monarchy, and even those who question the lese majeste law. Under these conditions, consensus is impossible. Instead, Thai society continues its historical tendency to demonize. Thailand has been divided into patriots and traitors.

5) Some royalists believe that without lese majeste law, the royal institution will become unstable. How realistic is such concern?

If it takes the lese majeste law to suppress criticism, expression of opinions, and public scrutiny—the hallmarks of any minimally functioning democracy—then the system is already precariously unstable. It is the lese majeste law itself and its use creating this instability, for it masks the truth or reality of the situation. I believe that Thai society, although already battered and divided, could survive and perhaps even flourish by a strong dose of the truth. It strengthens no public institution when society cannot exercise public reason. Those who want to protect the monarchy from public scrutiny weaken the institution and endanger its future.

6) Is there anything particularly unique about the recent arrest of Prachatai on-line newspaper’s director Chiranuch Premchaiporn under lese majeste law?

Chiranuch’s arrest indicates a worrying trend in lese majeste arrests. First, the police admit that they had a warrant for her arrest for as long as a year before actually seizing her at the airport. They claimed that they had to use this tactic because of the seriousness of the crime. Well, if it was so serious, the police had plenty of time to arrest her in her office where she was arrested last year. But instead, she was arrested while returning to the country from abroad. She is probably the fourth or fifth person to be arrested in this dramatic and needless manner. Second, this is probably another example of the increasing use of a

double lese majeste-computer crimes charge.

7) Given His Majesty’s advancing age, and concerns over the succession of the throne and the current political crisis, will there likely be more lese majeste charges made?

Unfortunately, it appears that in all of this political turmoil, lese majeste has become the preferred charge against political opponents, especially against the red shirts or those perceived to be redshirt sympathizers. The law has now become more than just a latent threat. Over a five year period—from 2005 to 2009—there were 430 cases accepted the Court of First Instance in Thailand, which handed down 231 decisions. Another 39 were received by the Appeals Court, and 9 by the Supreme Court. The number of lese majeste cases has skyrocketed under the present administration, to historically unprecedented and incomparable numbers—164 cases went to trial in the Court of First Instance in 2009. Such a vigorous use of a law for non-violent word crimes and against freedom of expression makes hollow Thailand’s claim to being democratic. And, of course, use of the law will continue to counter any attempts at reconciliation. In fact, it is the law and its use that comprise one of the chief roadblocks to reconciliation.

8) In your book, you wrote about Thai elites having “ossified Thai ‘culture’ into a mythical time”. Why are they so keen?

I argue that the entrenched culture of impunity has had a serious effect on the way that Thai society perceives the truth. The repeated coups, amnesties for perpetrators of murder, and general degradation of the laws and judicial system especially after the late 1950s so tortured and twisted Thai society and politics that simple truths became unrecognizable. Often this arrangement was supported by what I interpret as misdirected state-supported Buddhism which eagerly urged the victims of violence to forgive and move on. But the accumulated effects of denying historical truth have exacted a terrible price by allowing the next massacre to emerge. Thai history was essentially suspended in time, into a repeating monotonous melo-

drama of heroes and villains. It was under such a scheme that the defamation laws—including lese majeste—became paramount, and clearly showed a reversal in democratization. When the 1997 constitution jolted Thai history into movement, the old power structure acted to resuspend history by backing the 2006 coup. But, as events have shown, the 2006 coup was the one that many did not accept or forget.

Actually, this is encouraging. There needs to be a massive historical reckoning. Forgiveness has its place, but only after the truth has been told, the perpetrators of murder have been identified, and Thais have a chance to deal with what has happened—whether it is Dusunyor incident, 6 October, Black May, Tak Bai, and now, April-May 2010. Amnesties don’t change the fact that overthrowing the government in a coup or shooting unarmed civilians is against the law. In other countries citizens have pushed to address past cases of impunity. The lese majeste law and other defamation-based laws have made it difficult, but not impossible, for an aroused public to begin the process of this great historical reckoning.

9) Is lese majeste law related to the creation of a hegemonic notion of Thainess? How?

Beginning more than a century ago, great efforts were made to paper over ethnic and religious divisions. Later, other divisions, like economic and educational ones, were papered over with incessant calls for national unity. It was a grand effort, and it worked reasonably well for a century. This entire historical construction resulted in the notion of “Thainess.” Since 1960 when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat revived the monarchy ideologically, and especially since 1976 when the monarchy had become fully re-sacralized until just recently at least, love of the monarchy became the central tenet of Thainess. One regrettable aspect of this process is that Thainess became paramount, largely at the expense of every-thing else. So when the concept of Thainess begins to crack and fall apart piece by piece—as it seems to be doing now—it is understandably frightening because there is little else out there to unite people in Thailand. Coups have stripped consti-

tutions or a respect of rule of law of any meaning. There is no tradition of dealing with difference. The judicial system for many Thais is not the last resort. But in the process of reckoning with history and allowing truth to come out, it is possible that a new identity and unifying principle may emerge.

10) What is the most surprising discovery you made in the process of researching and writing up the book?

One of the most surprising things about the book is its relevance. When writing my dissertation in the 1990s, I was teased by graduate school friends for choosing such an irrelevant topic as defamation and lese majeste. Even when Routledge agreed to publish the book, lese majeste was still not very news-

worthy. At the time, former prime minister Thaksin Shinwatra was engaged in a defamation spree unequalled in Thai history. So when lese majeste popped back into the news in late 2005, and has with each year accelerated in relevance, it became a very hard book to finish! I finally chose Darunee's sentencing of 18 years in prison as a fitting end point. Another surprising discovery was the huge number of lese majeste cases since 2006, and the mind-boggling silence on the issue of most human rights organizations, both foreign and Thai.

11) Is your book being banned in Thailand?

I wouldn't think so! Why ban it? I don't believe that the contents of the book violate the lese majeste law or the country's defamation laws, and is

not contrary to good public morals and order. I believe that it may give pause to the wiser and more far-sighted royalists who truly have the institution's longterm interests in mind. It is a serious academic study that makes an attempt to explain the serious divisions in the country, and suggests a number of ways to move forward democratically and as a constitutional monarchy. Of course if the book was banned, it would prove the central thesis of the book that the powers that be, and significant swaths of Thai society, can't deal with different perspectives. But what would be gained in banning the book? No, I believe in a future Thailand (or rather, Siam) that is democratic, one that can deal with difference and new ways of understanding what a good citizen can be.

Pravit Rojanaphruk

Siam:

A Poet's Return Home to Thailand's Violent South

NARATHIWAT, THAILAND — The death toll in this strife-torn corner of southern Thailand moves relentlessly upward. Six years of insurgent attacks and battles with the Thai military have left 4,400 people dead and counting, cloaking this region of paddy fields and rubber plantations in near constant fear.

The conflict is one of Asia's most intractable. But the identity of the perpetrators and their ultimate goals remain so vague that the grinding violence is sometimes better conveyed in poetry.

*I hear peace sobbing
And shouting that resonates
Along sundry roads,
Around the city clock tower,
On dinner tables,
in tea shops.*

These are the verses of Zakariya Amataya, a 35-year-old poet who grew up in one of the districts now violently torn apart by long-held resentment over



Zakariya Amataya, a Muslim poet in a Buddhist land, is caught in the middle of Thailand's insurgency.

language, religion and nationalism. The insurgents are Muslim and ethnically Malay, and the Thai Army units sent here to fight them are largely Buddhist. Mr. Zakariya, a Muslim poet in a Buddhist land, is caught in the middle.

Next month, Mr. Zakariya will be formally awarded the region's top writing prize, hono-

ring his first published book of poetry. The prize, the Southeast Asian Writers Award, is an unusual achievement for the son of illiterate farmers. Also remarkable is that the language of Mr. Zakariya's poetry, Thai, is not his mother tongue. He grew up speaking a dialect of Malay spoken by the majority of people living in Thailand's three southernmost provinces along the border with Malaysia. These ethnic and linguistic differences and a feeling among Malays of cultural domination by the Thais are the kindling of the insurgency.

Mr. Zakariya has spent most of his adulthood in Bangkok, and many of his poems have no connection to the violence. But among his most poignant work are laments of what the bucolic land of his childhood has become and poems about other conflicts around the globe. He writes about occupying armies, includ-

ing two poems about Iraq, one through the eyes of a sniper racked by his conscience, another from the perspective of a child.

Oh, father, please put out the fire that is burning our land.

Father, take all the water buckets we have and pour them

On those cherry seeds so that they might grow back

From the ashes and remains of the city.

Butterflies will flutter across our forests again.

And if water won't put out the roaring fire,

Father, take my tears.

Earlier this month, Mr. Zakariya flew to his home province, his first trip back since winning the prize.

During two days of driving through what is known as the deep south, he met fellow writers and chatted with Thai Army commandos who happened to be seeking refuge in his old primary school. He was also reunited with the teacher who first introduced him to the Thai language. Violence followed him: an hour after Mr. Zakariya ate chicken curry at a restaurant in the provincial seat of Narathiwat, a mechanic was killed by assassins a few blocks away. Two hours after he drove through

a "red zone" known for steady violence, three salesmen delivering chickens in the zone were shot and killed in their pickup truck.

The daily toll of violence in the deep south is so numbing that each new beheading, explosion and drive-by shooting falls further back into the pages of the Thai press. The ethnic Malay minority here has for centuries chafed at Bangkok's control of the area, but experts cannot fully explain why in recent years the attacks have escalated so sharply. Unlike other rebel movements around the globe, insurgents here rarely claim responsibility for their attacks.

Mr. Zakariya's work strips out the nationalism of the conflict and brings a measure of humanity to the terror and faceless victims. Through his work he seeks to move beyond questions of identity, he says. "With my mind and thoughts I can decide who I want to be," he said. "I want to value humans more than ethnic groups or nationalities."

The head of the jury that awarded him the prize said ethnicity and politics did not come into play.

"We didn't know who he was or where he came from,"

said Adul Chantararak, the chairman of the seven-member jury, who called Mr. Zakariya's poems "powerful and intense."

The official announcement described his work as "borderless."

"It travels across time and space," the announcement said. "It's thought-provoking and encourages our imagination to think and rethink."

The title of Mr. Zakariya's book, "No Women in Poetry," takes its name from one of the poems. He writes in free verse, appropriate, perhaps, since the deep south feels like a place without rules.

The decision to award Mr. Zakariya the prize marked the first time in the 32-year history of the Southeast Asian Writers Award that the Thai jury was unanimous. (Committees in nine other Southeast Asian countries decided on their respective prizes separately.)

I am traveling in poetry

Poetry is traveling in me

We are heading to the same destination.

Thomas Fuller

October 20, 2010

International Herald Tribune

Sri Lanka:

Structural Greed and Buddhist-Christian Dia-praxis: A View from the Sri Lankan Grassroots

A colleague who worked as a community volunteer once told me a story. He was working in a remote area in a training center. In order to purchase food and materials and manage all of the training center logistics, he hired a middle-aged villager to help

him. The villager was constantly going to the shop to buy supplies. He would purchase some pens or notebooks, and the next day, he'd have to run to the store again to buy more items. The volunteer repeatedly asked the villager to purchase bigger volumes, but the

villager didn't change. Finally, the volunteer got angry and said, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you keep enough stock? Why don't you buy more at one time?"

The villager was silent for some time before slowly ans-

wering. "Sir, this is how my family has always done it. We only buy what we really need for right now. Why would we buy more?" I recently met the volunteer after 20 long years, and he reminded me of this story. He said, "That guy gave me the lesson of my life. From that day, I started thinking a little differently. Every time I go to the supermarket it hits me. I think about what I really need."

One could argue that the villager's behavior was due to lack of purchasing power or poor planning. Maybe. But it also represents a way of thinking that used to be very common in my country. People had a different understanding of material belongings and need. My family didn't have many material possessions when I was young. I didn't even have shoes when I started going to school, but my parents would have said they had everything they needed. They didn't think they needed material things to be happy. Happiness was relationships, belonging to a community, and living in harmony.

There have been many changes in my country over the past 60 years. I am going to talk about two different types of changes that I have seen at the ground level in my country. The first type of change is one that has been experienced in many other countries as well. Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa has written a lot about this change. In fact, his analysis of consumerism and materialism has helped me make sense of my own field experiences.

I became involved in development work when I was quite young. In those days, there was a social movement based on volunteerism in my country and I joined when I was a student leader. For us, development



meant building a new social order based on our own culture and strong spiritual values. A developed community was a self-reliant community living in balance and harmony. We would help community groups organize to address their own issues. People would volunteer their time and energy to build roads, community centers and preschools. They would work together to solve problems.

In the late 1970s, my country went for economic liberalization and things began to change very quickly. During the 1980s, international development agencies started funding more development projects in Sri Lanka. Their understanding of development was different from what we had been talking about in the 1960s and 1970s. The focus was on poverty, and poverty was defined by material possessions. Does your house have a tile roof and concrete walls? Do you have a TV? Do you have a motorbike? A vehicle? Do you have a fan? Air conditioning? Development meant having more material possessions. People who thought they had what they needed, found out that they were poor.

The mass media contributed to this. In our work, we could see how it changed how people understood themselves. It changed how they thought and

how they behaved. The new advertising was very effective. What might have been "wants" in the past, were now seen as "needs." This popular culture became like a religion for the young generation. Their aspirations and goals changed. Being successful meant having a big house, a car, and many material possessions. The popular media has the potential to play a positive role, but in our society it seems like the net effect has been to increase lobha, dvesha and moha (greed, hatred and delusion).

We still focus on mobilizing communities for collective action, but it is much more difficult than it was in the past. There's less sharing and less time for volunteer work. Even in very remote areas, people now have television. They are more likely to stay at home and watch tele-dramas than to come together to organize a community event. Our society has become more competitive and focused on personal gain.

The young generation of social mobilizers has a lot of questions about the meaning of development. They have learned tools and techniques from the international development agencies. They know how to conduct participatory assessments and wealth ranking, they know how to develop a "logical framework" and they know the international best practices for poverty reduction, but they also know that these tools and techniques are not enough. Increasing income and material possessions doesn't make people happy. What about values? Ethics? Spirituality?

Development interventions that do not consider these aspects do not have a positive long-term impact. We can see this from our experience. Without personal transformation and

strong social values, increasing material wealth has little meaning. Fortunately, there is now an active dialog on these issues within the development community. There is a growing recognition, even among the biggest international development agencies, that happiness and well-being can't be measured by material possessions. As Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted, counts."

So the first big change I've seen in my country is this shift towards consumerism and materialism. From what I understand, this is not only affecting my country, it has been a global experience. The second major change is more specific to Sri Lanka.

We did not have an independence struggle like most colonized countries. When the British left Sri Lanka, they handed power over to the local elite and established a 'majority rules' electoral system. We learned in school that democracy meant rule by the people, but it didn't take our politicians long to realize that, under this system, you didn't need support from *all* of the people. You only needed to represent the majority.

At the time of Independence, class politics and unions were very strong in Sri Lanka. There were a small number of very wealthy people while the majority lived at a basic subsistence level. From the perspective of class, the new politicians were a minority group. They were all wealthy and based in urban areas. They had very little in common with the majority of the people that they "represented." If they wanted to be seen as part of the majority, they needed to shift the focus from class to language and religion.

In my country, the majority community, the Sinhalese, make up 74 percent of the population. 69 percent of the people in Sri Lanka are Buddhist. Christians, Hindus and Muslims are in the minority. After Independence, the two main political parties began competing heavily for the Sinhalese Buddhist vote. Christian politicians converted to Buddhism. English-speaking politicians learned the Sinhala language. Political speeches and development programs had strong Sinhala Buddhist themes. Buddhist monks were pulled into election campaigns, and in 1956, Sinhala was made the official language of Sri Lanka. In a way, our politicians continued the British policy of divide and rule. If they could divide us along religious and ethnic lines, they could continue to rule.

I am saying this from my own experience. I'm from the generation in Sri Lanka that they call "the Children of '56." We were the first generation to go through school after the government passed the "Sinhala Only" policies and the country was starting to become more divided. I had the opportunity to study at a national Buddhist school called Ananda College and became the head of the country's Student Buddhist Union so I was right in the middle of this Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.

My main mentor at my school was a very famous Buddhist monk from an area called Kurunegala. One time during a school vacation, I traveled with him to stay at his temple. One day, he told me that would be spending the day with one of his best friends. It turned out his best friend was a Christian Bishop. I still can remember the shock I had seeing both of them

sitting together, eating and talking. As a young student from a strong Buddhist community in the South, it was the first time that I started feeling that Jesus had sweet and friendly followers. The Bishop was so handsome; he was just like a walking statue. He had a warm smile, and he gave me the first chocolate I had in my life.

The reason I was shocked to see this monk and Bishop together was that at my school, the senior student activists had told me that "strong" Buddhists had nothing to do with other religious groups. We weren't supposed to associate with them. What I saw that day changed how I felt and what I thought. Even now, when I have my own "best friends" from other religions, I still remember those great men as two of the best guides in my life.

In my school days, I saw the cracks in our society. These cracks continued to deepen until the country was fully divided along ethnic, religious and political lines. The past 30 years have been a very difficult period in my country. Ethnic riots and political killings expanded into a full-scale war. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed; hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes and communities. People lived in camps or fled the country as refugees. There were assassinations, bombings, suicide attacks, massacres, abductions and disappearances. Travel and transport of goods were restricted, livelihoods were disrupted, and resources were destroyed. Worst of all, traditional values were abandoned and social networks were torn apart.

The war created a culture of violence in the country that spread far beyond the conflict between the government and the

separatist groups. Rather than learning how to resolve problems through dialog and consensus, the younger generation learned to resolve problems through intimidation and violence. This was linked to the new consumerism. People used violence to gain power and wealth.

Displacement and war increased divisions along religious and ethnic lines. Earlier generations would have grown up in regular contact with members of other communities, but people under the age of 35 do not have this experience. They live in separate areas, attend separate schools, and speak separate languages. This isolation contributes to mistrust and fear. Other groups become abstract and are easily stereotyped. Some people that should have been teaching basic human values—parents, school teachers, and religious leaders—were teaching hatred. During the war, Tamil people saw all Sinhalese as soldiers and Sinhalese people saw all Tamils as ‘tigers.’

I say this was a very difficult time, but even during this period there were positive stories and lessons that we can learn from. I work with a development organization called Sewalanka. When it was started in the early 1990s, the country was fully divided by war, but the group of us who founded Sewalanka came from both the north and the south. We were an unusual group. We included representatives from all of Sri Lanka’s religious communities, and we wanted everyone to feel that it was their organization, regardless of their language or religion. We purposely selected the name Sewa, which means selfless service or spiritual service, because it has the same meaning in both the Sinhala and Tamil

language. We weren’t sure if it would work, but it did.

The young people who joined us came from all regions of the country, from the LTTE-controlled areas of the north to the most Sinhala Buddhist areas of the deep south. They trained together and learned together, and they began to develop relationships that crossed the conventional divides in our country. It took extra effort to organize translation and it took extra effort to incorporate all of the religious traditions into our programs and events, but it was worth it. Since we weren’t identified with only one community, we were able to work with people caught on all sides of the conflict. Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims worked together in the most difficult of situations. We supported and protected each other. If someone was held at a checkpoint or taken into custody, others would be there to help...at any time of the day or night.

We participated in each other’s feasts, festivals and religious events. We attended weddings and celebrated new babies. If a Sewalanka family member lost a loved one, people would come from all parts of the country to help with the funeral. During the final most difficult years of fighting, we started doing an annual pilgrimage. We would walk for more than 100 miles through the jungle together, sleeping under the trees. We cooked and ate together and learned each other’s songs and stories.

Sewalanka is just one example. There are others. We partner with an inter-religious network of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim clergy that we’ve watched have similar experiences. Their early meetings started with mistrust and misun-

derstandings, but as time has gone on, they’ve developed close personal relationships. Monks, priests, nuns, swamis and moulavi have shared meals, traveled to each other’s villages, stayed in each other’s temples, churches and mosques, and engaged in social service that crosses ethnic and religious boundaries. Even during these dangerous times when people could be killed for advocating peace, there were many people who continued to work for what they believed. There were people who worked together to protect the vulnerable regardless of the risk to their own personal wellbeing.

Last year, during the final months of the war, more than 300,000 people were displaced by the conflict. Civilians were trapped in the middle of the fighting. Many of our Sewalanka family members stayed with them to continue providing services. It was a very difficult time. When the war finished, the displaced people began to move south, and we were there to meet them. Even before the international community sent assistance, support came from all over the countryside. People who had relationships across religious and ethnic boundaries were the first to respond. They mobilized groups to put up tents, prepare and serve food, and provide medical care. Seeing everyone work together after so many years of war was a real bright spot in an otherwise difficult period.

There is a valuable lesson in these experiences. We’d been led to believe that we were all different from each other, but when we had a chance to interact and develop personal relationships, we began to see that we had been falsely divided. The barriers broke down and we recognized our common interests

and values.

This does not mean that all of our views and beliefs are the same. In my experience, this is a common mistake in inter-religious work. There's a tendency to try and brush away differences and say that all religions are fundamentally the same. I have heard many young monks question senior monks who try to make this claim. They say that the senior monks who talk like that should go live in the church if they don't understand the difference between the two teachings.

My understanding as a layman is that trying to oversimplify such complex issues can actually prevent genuine

understanding and exchange. Religious leaders who are involved in inter-religious work have an opportunity to have a dialog on their differences and demonstrate to others that diversity is not a barrier to unity. We can respect differences, but still find ways of working together on issues of common concern.

In a way, the current financial crisis and the environmental crisis have created an opportunity for religious leaders. People are becoming increasingly aware that "free" markets and profit motives cannot solve all of our problems. There is a recognition that something is missing.

My experiences in Sri Lanka

as a development worker and Buddhist layperson have convinced me that religious leaders have that missing piece. Religious teachings help people distinguish wants from needs. They remind people to integrate spirituality and morality into all of their actions. Most importantly, they catalyze the personal transformation that is the basis of any global transformation.

The challenges we face today are global in scale. We cannot afford to work in isolation. This program is an encouraging step in the right direction.

Harsha Kumara Navaratne



Tibet:

The Status of Discussions Between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Government of the People's Republic of China

I would like to thank the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) for providing this opportunity to share my thoughts on the status of our discussions with the Chinese government in finding a political solution to the issue of Tibet and the possible way forward.

Today, our talks with the Chinese leadership have reached a stage where, for the first time after decades of being in and out of contact, we have been able to convey to them in an unambiguous manner the position of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in seeking a solution within the framework of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the steps that need to be taken to resolve the Tibetan problem. Although we are yet to see any concrete outcome leading to a solution, our talks have certainly enabled the two sides to have a



better understanding of each other's position and concerns.

In order to put our dialogue process with the Chinese leadership in context, I would like to explain its historical development. Broadly, we can categorize the dialogue process into three phases since the process began in 1979:

Initial Contact (1979 – 1985)

The first phase started with the establishment of contact in 1979, when the then Chinese leader, Mr. Deng Xiaoping,

conveyed a message to His Holiness the Dalai Lama (through Mr. Gyalo Thondup, his elder brother) that except for the issue of Tibetan independence, all other issues could be discussed and resolved.

Subsequently, two high level Tibetan delegations were sent to Beijing for exploratory talks in 1982 and 1984 respectively. I was a member of both the delegations. We had wide-ranging discussions with the Chinese leadership. One of the issues that we had clarified then was the fact that the Tibetan problem is not about the future and personal wellbeing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but that it is about the welfare of the six million Tibetans.

Simultaneously, four fact-finding delegations were sent by His Holiness to study the conditions in different parts of

Tibet from 1979 to 1985.

During this phase of the dialogue process, the Tibetan delegations met with senior Chinese leaders, including Mr. Deng Xiaoping and other politburo members.

Tibetan Initiatives and Developments in Tibet (1985–1993)

The second phase of our dialogue process occurred between 1985 and 1993. There were infrequent visits by emissaries of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China during this period.

As an effort to encourage the beginning of serious talks on the issue of Tibet, in September 1987 His Holiness presented his Five-Point Peace Plan, his vision for a way forward on Tibet, in an address to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington D.C. Thereafter, in June 1988, His Holiness elaborated on the fifth point (calling for earnest negotiations on Tibet) of his Five-Point Peace Plan, in an address at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The essential characteristics of this proposal were that Tibetans would enjoy self-governance in their internal affairs, with Beijing maintaining overall responsibility in matters of foreign affairs and defence.

Thereafter, the Chinese government publicly agreed to meet His Holiness' representatives to discuss issues any time at a venue of his choice. His Holiness responded positively and immediately to this indicating his sincerity and determination to engage in dialogue. He appointed a negotiation team and proposed that the talks be held in Geneva. Unfortunately, Beijing responded negatively to this by raising procedural issues, despite clarifications from the Tibetan side. His Holiness' subsequent proposal for our two sides to

meet in Hong Kong in April of that year was also rejected.

September 1987 saw the beginning of a series of massive demonstrations by Tibetans in Tibet expressing their grievances against Chinese policies. The PRC authorities resorted to brutal crackdown on the Tibetans, imprisoning hundreds and declaring martial law in Tibet in 1989. The Chinese Government's attitude spoiled the atmosphere for the dialogue process during this period.

Meanwhile, as an indication of the international community's recognition of his peaceful efforts, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. China responded negatively to this honoring of His Holiness.

Eventually, contacts between our two sides broke off in August 1993.

Re-establishment of the dialogue process (2002 onwards)

After several years of intense and active informal and behind the scene contacts, our two sides agreed to resume formal direct contact and the first round in this process took place in September 2002. This process can be categorized as the third phase. This phase has become more institutionalized with meetings being more business like. Since 2002, nine rounds of talks and one informal session have been held. The most recent round, the Ninth Round, took place in January 2010. I have been leading the Tibetan side in all these deliberations.

During these rounds we have been able to present and clarify His Holiness the Dalai Lama's position on the future of Tibet. Our talks eventually developed to a stage where we formally presented a Memo-

randum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People during the Eighth Round in November 2008.

Our Memorandum puts forth our position on genuine autonomy and how the specific needs of the Tibetan nationality for autonomy and self-government can be met through application of the principles on autonomy of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, as we understand them. It outlined 11 basic needs of the Tibetan people, which are provided for in the PRC's Constitution and Law on Regional National Autonomy.

Since the Chinese leadership had several concerns relating to the Memorandum, which they rejected as being unconstitutional, we presented a Note to the Memorandum during the Ninth Round in January this year. This Note addressed the concerns and offered some constructive suggestions for a way forward in our dialogue process. The Note was also intended to prevent misinterpretation and misconception by the general public about His Holiness' position.

We emphasized that His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sole concern is the wellbeing of the Tibetan people. His Holiness has never raised any issue relating to his personal wellbeing or the welfare of the people around him. Our position is that most of the Tibetan people are being severely marginalized and that they do not enjoy satisfactory religious, political, economic, language and cultural, and social rights. The widespread peaceful demonstrations throughout Tibet, starting from March 10, 2008, once again clearly indicated the people's dissatisfaction with the Chinese policies. The majority of these peaceful de-

monstrations took place outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Just last month, from October 19, there were a series of peaceful rallies against the proposed replacement of Tibetan language by Chinese as the medium of instruction in schools. This is but the latest indication of Tibetan grievances.

The Chinese Government, however, contends that the Tibetan people are in a happy and satisfactory situation, and that there is no Tibetan issue.

In the light of these two differing perspectives, we suggested that there be a study by the two sides to determine the conditions of the Tibetan people. The Tibetan people should have the opportunity to participate in this study without fear or suspicion. If the outcome of this study is that most of the Tibetans feel there is no problem and their present situation is satisfactory, this is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama is calling for. But if the outcome confirms that most of the Tibetan people are not in a satisfactory situation, the Chinese government then needs to recognize that there is a problem and, in the spirit of seeking truth from facts, our two sides need to discuss and find a solution.

Also, during the informal session in Shenzhen in May 2008, we rejected the Chinese charge that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan leadership in exile have instigated the demonstrations throughout the Tibetan areas since March 10, 2008.

Since we find that the same allegations are being repeated, we asked the Chinese Government to clarify and invited it to undertake a thorough scientific investigation, in Tibet as well as in the Tibetan community in exile, into the veracity of their charge. We stated our readiness to extend

every support to such an investigation.

Some Important Issues Raised by the Chinese Side

During our most recent round, the Chinese side provided us with a detailed briefing on developments relating to Tibet, particularly on the Fifth Tibet Work Forum, held from January 18 to 20, 2010. They said the Forum decided to further improve the livelihood of Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region and all Tibetan areas, specifically in public services, such as education, medical services, and environmental protection. Based on the initial reports that we had of the Forum, we welcomed the decision to improve the lives of the Tibetan people, especially in rural areas.

We especially welcomed the fact that the Fifth Tibet Work Forum has looked into the issues of development in all Tibetan areas –The Tibet Autonomous Region as well as other Tibetan areas. It is our strong belief that all the Tibetan areas must be under a uniform policy and a single administration. If we take away the political slogans, many of the issues that have been prioritized by the Forum are similar to the basic needs of the Tibetan people outlined in our Memorandum. However, recent indications are that instead of having a positive uniform policy for all Tibetan areas, there is effort to extend the stringent measurements already in place in the Tibet Autonomous Region to all other Tibetan areas. This is a counterproductive measure and the Chinese authorities need to realize this.

The Essence of the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach

One of the fundamental points that the Chinese officials

fail to acknowledge is the fact that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is sincere and serious in his efforts for a solution within the framework of the People's Republic of China through his Middle Way Approach.

His Holiness and the Tibetan leadership in exile took the courageous decision not to seek Tibetan independence but genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people that would ensure their basic needs of safeguarding their distinct culture, language, religion and identity and the delicate natural environment of the Tibetan plateau.

The Middle Way Approach is a way to peacefully resolve the issue of Tibet and to bring about stability and co-existence between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples, based on equality and mutual co-operation. Its origin goes back to the mid-1970s when His Holiness had internal discussions with his advisors. Over the years the Tibetan leadership in exile refined the concrete features of the Middle Way Approach to in the light of existing political realities in the PRC.

Official Chinese media continue to label His Holiness as being a separatist, who wants to regain Tibetan independence. They refer to contents of his statements of the past, including the Five Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal, deliberately ignoring His Holiness' subsequent appreciation of Chinese concerns and clarification of his position.

Our Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People clearly outlined His Holiness's Middle Way Approach.

Our Memorandum and the Note to the Memorandum have been well received by many governments, parliaments, insti-

tutions, organizations and individuals as being very reasonable and legitimate. Many are surprised and deeply disappointed with the Chinese government's reactions. Finding the Chinese government's position inappropriate, they continue to emphatically urge them to engage in a substantive dialogue with us on the agenda of the Memorandum. For example, following a meeting between His Holiness and President Obama on February 18, 2010, the White House released a statement saying, "The President commended the Dalai Lama's "Middle Way" approach, his commitment to nonviolence and his pursuit of dialogue with the Chinese government."

Wider Implications of the Unresolved Tibetan Issue

Resolving the Tibetan issue concerns not merely the rights of the Tibetan people. Rather, it concerns the future of the Tibetan Buddhist culture, which impacts both the Tibetan people and the broader international community. Tibetan Buddhist culture, which promotes a culture of compassion that is much needed in Tibet, in China and the region as a whole. When we talk about Tibetan Buddhist culture we are not talking about the religious aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

Specifically, China is aspiring to be a superpower but such a status cannot be achieved purely through military and economic strength. Rather, moral authority is a very important condition and this can be imparted by the Tibetan Buddhist culture.

From the geopolitical perspective, too, if the issue of Tibet is resolved, it will be a positive factor not only in the relationship between the two upcoming global powers, India and China, but also to the region as a whole.

Here, I concur with Singapore's Foreign Minister, Mr George Yeo, who wrote in an article that "Tibet is part of a much larger Asian drama that is changing the world". Certainly, on account of geo-political, strategic and environmental reasons, the situation in Tibet will have deep impact to the changing landscape in Asia.

Environmentally, the Tibetan plateau is of great importance with scientists virtually naming it as the Third Pole. Tibet is the source of many major Asian rivers. Thus, if the Tibetan environment is impacted, it affects the global environment.

There is another implication about the Tibetan issue that impacts the Chinese people themselves. Today, there is increasing awareness of the Tibetan situation among the Chinese people. This is even more evident among the intellectuals and with younger generation. Many of them have courageously called for pragmatic approach to the Tibetan issue and sees His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the key factor in helping resolve the Tibet issue. They have realized that the attitude of the Chinese Government to the issue of Tibet will have a direct bearing on China's own future, including its domestic stability and international standing.

Some Challenges

I have no reasons to doubt the Chinese authorities repeated assertion on the Tibetan issue that the "door is open for dialogue and the negotiations". At the same time, I cannot help but feel concerned about their sincerity and seriousness in pursuing the present process for a substantive and meaningful outcome.

It seems that a section of leadership in Beijing continues to entertain the illusion that the

problems in Tibet can be solved or confronted by economic means and that the China's global standing as a economic and political power provides them leverage both domestically and internationally to impose its arbitrary stand.

They also continue to deceive themselves with the belief that the Tibetan problem will cease to challenge them once His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is no more with us or the issue will lose its edge due to his advanced age.

The biggest concern of the Chinese leadership is the legitimacy of its rule in Tibet. The Chinese leadership knows that only one individual, the Dalai Lama, has the capability and authority to provide that. His Holiness is aware of the People's Republic of China's concerns and sensitivities. For this reason we have conveyed directly to the Chinese leadership, and His Holiness has also publicly stated, that he stands ready to lend his moral authority to endow an autonomy agreement, once reached, with the legitimacy it will need to gain the support of the Tibetan people and to be properly implemented.

The Chinese Government has also been making the case that it would like everyone to respect its core issues, most importantly, the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the PRC. As can be seen from the points I have made here, we respect these concerns. At the same time, we also have a core issue, namely the preservation and promotion of the distinct identity of the Tibetan people. The Chinese Government must acknowledge and respect this legitimate right of the Tibetan people and work with us accordingly.

Fundamentally, the Tibetan

issue needs to be resolved between the Tibetans and the Chinese. Just as the Chinese Government does not want a third party involvement, we Tibetans, too, feel the right way is to resolve it through talks with the Chinese leadership. At the same time the issue of Tibet is of international concern with direct bearing on the peace and stability of Asia.

It is essential for students of the Tibetan-Chinese conflict to clearly understand and appreciate the differences between the fundamental positions of our two sides. Some experts do not seem to understand this.

The Way Forward

We do not see any reason why we cannot find a common ground on the Tibetan issue if the Chinese leadership has the sincerity and the political will to move forward.

We are convinced that this could be done without rewriting the history of Tibet. This is because if we go on the path of

rewriting history of Tibet it will then not only lead to complicating further some of the existing conflicts in China's relationship with others, but even give birth to new ones. Furthermore, the Chinese leadership needs to ponder whether it should make claims on the basis of some past imperial actions and should understand the international ramification and repercussion if it continues to do so.

Today's Chinese leaders are also talking about establishing a harmonious society. We certainly support this endeavor as we believe it will directly impact China's policies on the Tibetan people. However, it is clear that there cannot be a harmonious society without equality among nationalities.

Tibetans, especially those who are inside Tibet, continue to face the stark reality of the absence of equality at every level. Prominent Tibetan leaders, including the Late Panchen Lama, have repeatedly voiced their concerns in this regard by saying

that any talks about unity should be preceded by the presence of equality.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has a forward-looking approach and has shown his willingness to take any initiative necessary that is in the interest of the Tibetan people, that will encourage harmony and stability in the People's Republic of China, and that will promote peace in the region. His Holiness is committed to work with the Chinese Government so that the Tibetan people can maintain their distinctive identity, regain their pride and dignity and the stability and unity of the People's Republic of China are ensured.

Once again, I am grateful for this opportunity to share my thoughts at this prestigious institution.

Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari,
Special Envoy of H.H. the Dalai
Lama, at the Institute of South
Asian Studies, Singapore on
November 24, 2010

School for Wellbeing

The Search for an Alternative Development Path

Step by step the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research is taking shape as an independent think pond/do tank, and as a creative learning platform. In stead of a Summer Course as planned in 2010 – our “summer” was too hot with political turmoil resulting in 95 people killed during violent clashes in Bangkok! – the School team organized individual public lectures and workshops. In the first place with Nic Marks of the New Economics Foundation (NEF), U.K., who passionately explained the importance of a shift from GDP-driven growth towards guidance



*Poster Vandana Shiva
and Helena Norberg-Hodge*

from National Accounts of Wellbeing. His *Happy Planet Index* remains an awakening innovation in the world of alternative indicators and Nic is spreading his message as a global TED speaker.

Vandana Shiva presented her insights on *Earth Democracy. Justice, Sustainability and Peace*, the title of one of her recent books, translated into Thai by Suan Nguen Mee Ma publishers, in Bangkok within the framework of the SIFA Public Dialogues organized by the School for Wellbeing. SIFA stands for Saranrom Institute of

Foreign Affairs, the training and development arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

SIFA is a semi-autonomous academic institute established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate an independent exchange of views on foreign policy and international issues. The panel discussion among Thai experts echoed the concerns of Vandana, as well as her strong inspiration to 'reclaim our commons'. Vandana Shiva announced that she has been asked by the Prime Minister of Bhutan to support the country to stay and renew itself as an 'organic country'. Bhutan will be one of the very few countries in the world, if not the only, that can approximate this status. In most countries organic production is not more than 10% or lower of total 'agribusiness', as is the case in Thailand: >1%. We plan to form associations and join the *Organic Asia* campaign initiated by organic agriculture activist Ong Kung Wai, Penang, Malaysia. From the perspective of the mindful consumer we hope to represent our intentions to socialize organic agriculture by strengthening domestic markets at the IFOAM conference/assembly in Korea, September 2011.

IFOAM is the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements which, since the early 1970's, brings together independent producers, traders and consumer organizations from all over the world. The *Green Market Network* in Thailand, like the School for Wellbeing managed by Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise, became a member of IFOAM recently.

Other initiatives emerging in Bhutan and supported by co-founders of the School the Centre for Bhutan Studies in

Thimphu, are the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative under patronage of Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche, the Founder of Deer Park Institute in India. Ron Colman, GPIAtlantic, Canada, Advisor of the School for Wellbeing and Prashant Varma, pioneer at Deer Park are central in developing this initiative in South East Bhutan. Somboon Chungprampree plans to join the opening ceremony, an opportunity to shape long term cooperation. The other initiative is the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, founded by Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, the first officially recognized NGO in Bhutan.



Students
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The second highlight of the year in the framework of the SIFA Public Dialogues was the presentation of Helena Norberg Hodge at Thammasat University. Thammasat is a progressive university of Thailand founded in the heart of Bangkok along the Chao Praya River, by statesman Pridi Banomyong. Helena's message to *Bringing the Food Economy Home* (one of her books, published in Thai by Suan Nguen Mee Ma) addresses the strong moral and purchasing support needed for the diversity of organic producers and traders trying to strengthen local organic markets in Thailand and throughout Asia. At present most organic products, in particular organic rice, are

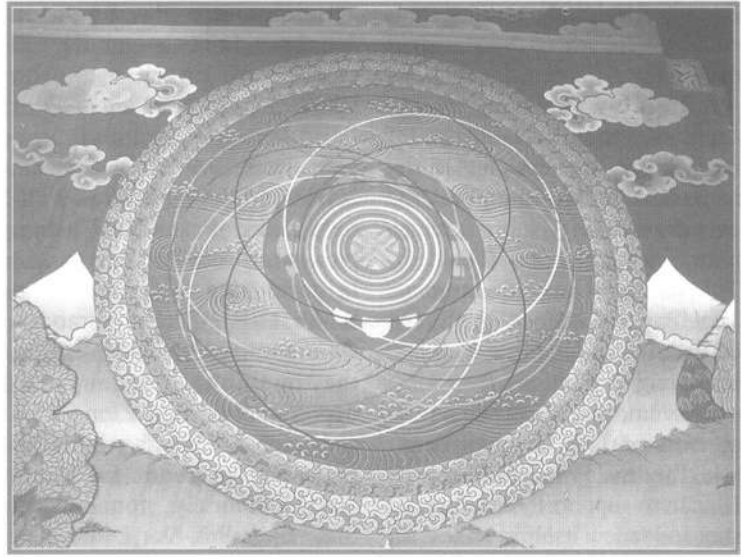
exported to Europe and USA, while domestic consumption remains weak. Early next year, probably on 15 February 2011, Helena's long awaited film *The Economics of Happiness* will be screened in Bangkok as part of a global launching campaign. The launching will coincide with the commemoration of the natal centenary of Dr. Puey Ungphakorn in 2011, the prominent Thai economist and former Governor of the Bank of Thailand, who inspired the search for alternative development pathways until today.

The public lectures and dialogues organized by the School for Wellbeing were followed by the launching of its first innovative research project. This meeting took place in the crowded lecture hall at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. This faculty is the home base of Soraj Hongladarom, professor of philosophy and Director of the Centre for Ethics of Science and Technology, one of the researchers. The project titled *the Well-Being Society scenario project* was initiated by a presentation of Decharut Sukkumnerd, lecturer at Kasetsart Agriculture University, on Health Impact Assessment (HIA). This evidence-based method of raising awareness, and stimulating dialogue among stakeholders on health risks caused by economic activity, was successfully (until unilateral government intervention) applied to the Map Ta Phut case, a rural area near Rayong, Gulf of Thailand coast, completely overgrown by devastating industrial projects.

Eminent importance of 'HIA', as well as subsequent civil action and environmental rehabilitation movements, were earlier emphasized by Takayoshi Kusago during the panel discussion *Are Alternative Indica-*

tors *Turning the World Upside Down?* at the 3rd international conference on Gross National Happiness, Nongkhai and Bangkok, Thailand, 2007. Kusago's presentation during the GNH panel on the alarming Minamata case in Japan resulted in ongoing exchanges between researchers and civil society representatives from Map Ta Phut and Minamata City. Japanese industrialists have strong stakes in Map Ta Phut as many factories with high negative health impact have been moved from developed countries, under growing pressure, to Thailand and other less regulated countries. It is ironic that recently Thai business conglomerates, supported by the government, and welcomed by the pre-elections Burmese junta, launched the huge heavy industry Dawei project and deep-sea harbor in nearby Burma, including 'infra-structure' linking both industrial estates; more or less at the same moment in history as the belated 'liberation' of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The *Well-Being Society scenario project* intends to develop the HIA method towards a comprehensive approach of comparing three scenarios: the neo-liberal, the communist/socialist and the Well-Being Society scenario. The search for a 'Third Way', or Middle Way economics have never resulted in a systemic, genuine alternative development path yet. Three aspects of the scenarios will be researched into more depth: property regimes by Surat Horaichaikul; the role in development of organic agriculture by Duangjai Rungrojcharoenkit; and well-being driven social innovations in the world of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by Soraj Hongladarom. The last two research topics will be evaluated towards oppor-



Mural painting at Punakha Dzong, Bhutan

tunities for social entrepreneurship in the perspective of *Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide*. While property regimes will be analysed according to their degree of resonance with the three scenarios, taking as the leading question which of the scenarios resonates primarily with private (neo-liberalism?), public (communism/socialism?) or with new common property regimes: the Well-Being Society scenario.

The leading image for our attempt to bring diverse and complex interdisciplinary efforts together in three well accentuated scenarios with clear inner logic, so that they can be useful for making evidence-based policy decisions, was found in a remarkable mural painting in Punakha, Bhutan. A slide of the mural painting was presented for inspiration to the audience by Hans van Willenswaard, Project Director of the 3-year scenario-project supported by the Thailand Research Fund.

Thai Advisors Ven. Dhammananda bhikkhuni and Suri-chai Wung'aeo closed the meeting with encouragement and

critical comments.

The School for Wellbeing Studies and Research plans an international exchange on *Rethinking Property* and *Scenario-building* in May 2011. Readers of *Seeds of Peace* are welcome to share ideas on how to prepare for this creative event. Advice has been asked from Jost Wagner, Director of *The Change Initiative* and expert in scenario planning, based in Bangkok. Jost worked with Sulak Sivaraksa in the early 1990's and is now a professional process facilitator.

The School proposes to work in close cooperation with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and the Buddhist Economics Research Platform (BERP) on further exploring the concept and practice of Buddhist Economics in diverse contexts. Meetings in Sri Lanka, Europe, and during the bi-annual INEB conference, to be held in November 2011 in Bodhgaya, India, are under consideration.

Hans van Willenswaard
hans@schoolforwellbeing.org
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Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

In the past months, the INEB secretariat and key INEB committee members have been involved in several international forum activities. Most of these forums are attempting to apply Buddhism and spirituality to be more engaged in society and respond to issues such as the global climate chaos.

On the 21-22 of November, 16 INEB advisory and executive committee members met at the Wongsanit Ashram in Thailand. It was an impressive kalayanamitra platform, with a practical output for the planning of engagement in many issues. For the coming years, INEB and its partners are in the process of organizing several projects to respond to wider target groups and partners, and to be more effective and participatory in the management of the program.

Project ideas in the process of development include **Young Bodhisattva Development, 'Under the Bodhi Tree', INEB Global Conference on Buddhist Engagement with Climate Change and Declining Biodiversity, Buddhist Economics, Buddhist Arts, INEB Conference and Think Sangha.**

INEB welcomes more project ideas and collaboration in the engagement of Buddhism with wider society. Please contact the secretariat office if you have any ideas for future initiatives.

We are proud to confirm and announce the forthcoming bi-annual **INEB Conference at Bodhgaya, India, 26-29 October 2011.** The theme for this conference is **The Future of Buddhism: From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation.** The conference will include over 20 practical workshops with key Buddhist activist leaders from around the world. Please do visit our webpage for more details and register soon at conference@inebnetwork.org

Yours in Dhamma,

Somboon Chungprampree (Moo)
Executive Secretary
secretariat@inebnetwork.org
www.inebnetwork.org

Did you renew your subscription?

May we remind our readers to renew your subscription or help others who cannot afford to pay for *Seeds of Peace* so the publication will be available to all who seek something to read beyond those provided by the mainstream mass media. The suggested rate is USD.50.00 per year. If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to supporting INEB activities for grassroots people in poor countries.

Steps Ahead: The INEB Executive and Advisory Committee Meeting

From November 19-25, INEB held its annual Executive and Advisory Committee meeting at the Wongsanit Ashram on the outskirts of Bangkok. The actual meeting was only two days, but a 3 day INEB Young Bodhisattva project strategic planning session was held afterwards and a 2 day *kalyanamitra* retreat held at the very beginning. The location at the Wongsanit Ashram was ideal. Founded 20 years ago by Ajahn Sulak as a place for activists to train and get away for periods of time, the participants had plenty of space to talk late into the night, practice meditation, enjoy delicious vegetarian food, go for walks and commune together in our regular afternoon Thai herbal saunas. As a network that functions as much on the power of *kalyanamitra* (spiritual friendship) as anything else, the time and space for building relationship beyond the confines of “business meetings” is vital to INEB; and this was at least realized among the Indian participants who renewed their bonds through chats going on deep into the night!

The week began with the *kalyanamitra* retreat (for meditation, dharma study, and relationship building), a new aspect to INEB meetings that was first begun at last year’s 20th anniversary conference held in Chiang Mai. The result of last year’s retreat was extremely positive on the general conference and had a powerful effect especially on some of the younger newcomers to INEB. This year’s retreat had equally positive results, especially since there were a number of young participants who had come early in order to

join the Young Bodhisattva meeting.

The main Executive Committee and Advisory Committee meeting was attended by a mix of people from both committees. Again because of the Young Bodhisattva training, the new young members of the INEB executive Committee were able to attend and take active part in the meeting. Some of the highlights of the meeting were:

- After a number of years of discussion and debate, a major resolution was passed on the nature of the network. The greater network itself should remain as an open network of *kalyanamitra* fueled by our relationships rather than centralized organization. However, the INEB Secretariat itself in Bangkok needs to be considered as an organization proper so that it can more clearly define its structure and be able to sustain itself financially through sources that may come from outside of the network. The new sub-committees on Finance and Networking formed this year will further work out these details as well as locate the proper funding so that the Secretariat and its staff stands on firm ground.
- Major steps were taken towards developing plans for not only an international conference on Buddhism and climate change in 2012 but developing a more comprehensive 3 year INEB Environmental program. This program will build up to the 2012 conference and

go beyond it in sharing resources and know-how for conducting grassroots Buddhist based environmental activities. The project will also help locate and develop Buddhists who can participate in major global environmental conferences to articulate a Buddhist perspective on the issues.

- A resolution was passed that INEB should adopt His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s position on Tibet of positive engagement with the Chinese government. Although INEB will continue to speak out against human rights abuses in Tibet, it will seek to engage positively on various levels with Buddhists and non-Buddhists within Mainland China. INEB hopes to form a bridge for increased dialogue between the Chinese and the Tibetans and with Chinese Buddhists inside China in general. The precise wording and outline of this INEB policy will be announced later.
- Further preparations were made for the next INEB Conference to be held in Bodhgaya India in late October and early November 2011. Laos and Cambodia were announced as potential sites for the 2013 conference, while Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia were announced as potential sites for the annual Executive and Advisory Committees meeting of 2012.
- About the INEB Young Bodhisattva Program, a full report will be made later. However, we are very

pleased to announce that a brand new three year comprehensive program will be launched in the coming year. At this time, there are roughly 8-10 participant organizations from India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia with hopes to expand to Nepal, Malaysia, Japan and the West. The program will support the

training of socially engaged Buddhist youth at the grassroots level, an annual international group training for members from all participant organizations, specialized courses, and a separate exchange program of interns among participant organizations.

- The INEB website has been revamped and will be continually developed and

improved over the next few months, included a way to make donations through credit card and PayPal. The new site is also now hosting the longtime Think Sangha website. Please visit at: <http://www.inebnetwork.org/>

Report by *Jonathan Watts*,
INEB Executive Committee

The 1st Conference of Grassroots Activities for Reviving Buddhism in Japanese Society

The 1st Conference of Grassroots Activities for Reviving Buddhism in Japanese Society was held on October 5, 2010 at the Tokyo Grand Hotel under the sponsorship of the Zenseikyo Foundation & Buddhist Council for Youth and Child Edification and the Rinbutsuken Institute for Socially Engaged Buddhism. In the Japanese Buddhist world, there had never before been such an event to assemble Buddhist priests and general Buddhists engaged in activities for society from all over the country representing a variety of denominations to present their work and exchange their views. There could be seen a great interest in the presentations of these ongoing activities among the 150 participants who assembled from all over the country.

Keynote Speaker Rev. Yasuaki Nara, Professor Emeritus of the Soto Zen affiliated Komazawa University and Board Member of the Rinbutsuken Institute, opened the conference by speaking on the theme, "Towards Restoring an Interconnected Society." Rev. Nara explained how many young Japanese don't talk with others

about their personal matters for fear of being seen as strange and then getting harassed. This is the reason so many have ended up taking refuge in the internet world. Rev. Nara used the metaphor of Indra's Net to emphasize our mutual interdependence and to "advocate 'a grassroots movement of Buddhists who get involved'" to work to rebuild society. After Rev. Nara's keynote, there were 28 different presentations on grassroots activities by mostly Buddhist priests focused on cultivating young people and responding to people with emotional and mental problems; a few of which we will outline below:

- Rev. Ryokan Misono (Tokoin temple, Tendai) gave a presentation on his experiential farming activities connected to his temple called "The Buddha's Veggie Garden." About 80 people, mostly temple members, participate in this project from a broad range of ages from kindergarteners and elementary school students to junior and senior high students as well as the elderly. The participants

plant and cultivate throughout the year various crops, such as buckwheat, potatoes, onions, etc. Through working together doing farm work, divisions between generations are transcended and a caring mind is developed among the young and elderly alike.

- Rev. Tomoaki Eda (Institute of Comprehensive Buddhist Studies) gave a presentation on Project Dana Tokyo. This project is run mainly by 11 priests from the Jodo Shin Hongan-ji Pure Land denomination to provide volunteer priests who provide companionship to the elderly living in social welfare facilities located near temples. First, Project Dana receives communication from priests in an area who "want to offer companionship and deep listening as a volunteer." After locating a facility for them to visit, they go once a month to offer concentrated companionship to the elderly. At the beginning of this work, some of the directors of these facilities as well as the el-

derly themselves had doubts about visits from Buddhist priests, but now that they have come to understand their work, they are being requested to come visit other facilities as well.

- Rev. Noda Daito (Soto Zen) of Hoshi-on temple gave a presentation on “The Effectiveness of a Temple-based Big Family”. At his mountain temple, Rev. Noda has received young “shut-ins” (*hikikomori*), those who have remained in their rooms for years unable to face society (a total of over one million exist in Japan). He has also set up a special school on the temple grounds for juvenile delinquents and children with learning disabilities. Much of his rehabilitation work is based on exposing these young people to the simple and mindful Zen lifestyle of meditation, chanting, preparing meals, farming, and living close to nature. He is now expanding this work by building an elderly home in which these abandoned young people will help care for the abandoned elderly.
- Rev. Sojun Wada (Myokyu-ji Jodo Shin Hongan-ji Pure Land) gave a presentation on Buddhist Education through Shadow Play. Rev. Wada has developed shadow play as the chair of a theatre troupe called “The Fresh Sprouts of Shadow Play.” He says that, “Shadow play must take place in the dark at night, and this makes it easy to create a religious atmosphere. Doing it at the temple is also perfect” for making a great shadow play.
- Rev. Jotetsu Nemoto (Dai-zen-ji temple, Rinzai Zen)

gave a presentation on “The Reasons for Not Living.” Rev. Nemoto works mostly through the internet to create a community to talk with those contemplating suicide. He does consultations using social networking services (SNS), blogging, e-mail, telephoning, etc. as well as actually gathering such people together for outdoor camping. He continues on with his activities maintaining a faith that “for these kinds of people, the thing that is needed is to have even just one person who will come to understand them.”

- Rev. Kakuho Aoe (Jodo Shin Pure Land) of the Interdenominational Buddhist Association (IBA) gave a presentation on “Developing New Approaches.” IBA uses its Higan-ji (“other shore”) virtual temple homepage as the main pillar of its activities where it presents a variety of information on Buddhist themes. However, it also goes beyond the net to organize a wide variety of activities connected to Buddhist temples, such as concerts and creating open spaces at temples for peaceful leisure time.

- Rev. Gakugen Yoshimizu (Jodo Pure Land) of the One Spoonful Association gave a presentation on “Becoming Intimate with the Situation of Needy People”. Rev. Yoshimizu is one of the leaders of the One Spoonful Association comprised of mostly young Jodo Pure Land priests and lay volunteers who gather twice a month to wander their neighborhood streets in Tokyo to bring food and medicine to the growing number of homeless people. More than simply charity work, these activities have conscientized both the priests and the volunteer participants to become more comprehensively involved in the deepening suffering from economic decline in Japan, especially the high rate of suicide and the increasing need for health care and other forms of welfare for the poor.

Written by Hideo Usui for *Pippala*, the monthly magazine of the Zenseikyo Foundation & Buddhist Council for Youth and Child Edification. Translated and edited by Jonathan Watts (INEB Executive Committee and Rinbutsuken Institute research fellow)

Draft proposal on the upcoming INEB Conference 2011.

**FUTURE OF BUDDHISM:
From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation**
at Bodhgaya, India.

19-23 October 2011	International Youth Volunteer Workshop
19-25 October 2011	Buddhist Art Workshop
24-25 October 2011	Arrival & Registration
26-29 October 2011	Conference
30 October 2011	Study Visit
30 October 2011	INEB Advisory/Executive Committee Meeting
31 October 2011	Departure
1-7 November 2011	Clergy Retreat at Saranath
	Optional lay retreat
	Optional pilgrimage to Buddhist sites

A Buddhist-Christian Common Word on Structural Greed

A Joint Statement

From 22 - 26 August 2010, thirty Buddhists from the Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions and Christians from the Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions met at Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, under the theme, "Buddhists and Christians Engaging Structural Greed Today." The consultation was jointly organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and hosted by the Institute of Religion, Culture and Peace at Payap University. Participants included activists, economists, religious leaders and scholars from Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, UK and USA.

The global financial crisis into which much of the world plunged in October 2008 has left large numbers of people around the world devastated, distraught and robbed of their human dignity. The WCC and LWF, who have a history of engaging questions of economic justice, recognize that the root causes of this crisis have not simply to do with economic realities but also with spirituality and morality. The Churches' Commission on International Affairs (CCIA) affirmed that Christianity alone does not have the resources effectively to address this crisis but must cooperate with other religions which, over centuries, have deeply reflected on the question of greed and have significant wisdom to offer. The LWF similarly has made the com-

mitment to "engage with those of other faiths and with the rest of society in efforts to subvert greed and develop alternatives that are life-giving and sustaining for all."

We, Christians and Buddhists, therefore convened to seek a common word on the present crisis, recognizing that structural greed is at the core of the financial crisis. Recalling a saying of the Buddha, "in a situation of crisis, act as if your turban is on fire," we underscore the urgency of the situation. Recognizing also that the crisis has created an unprecedented opportunity to speak to the governments, financial institutions and to our own religious communities, we present the following observations that form our common word.

The present context

We, Buddhists and Christians, observe that one of the primary reasons for the global financial crisis is that over the past centuries economic processes have been progressively motivated and structured by the goal of maximizing profits for capital owners and thus monopolizing the world market. Following the great recession of 1929, political regulations to control this tendency were instituted. The dismantling of these regulations a few decades ago resulted in an environment for the unbridled explosion of personal and structural greed, leading to a debt and mortgage crisis, to unparalleled disparities between the super-rich and those who go hungry every day and to the accelerated degradation of

the environment.

We, Buddhists and Christians, acknowledge that as individuals and religious communities we participate intentionally or unintentionally in seeking benefits from this system of personal and institutional greed and so have been complicit in its devastating effects. At the same time, we acknowledge our responsibility to learn about, resist and seek to change the system that destroys the lives of large numbers of mostly poor people in the world. In recent decades, more people have become comfortable with greed and have begun to believe that unregulated greed is good and that unbridled competition and the accumulation of wealth are necessary for human progress. A steady diet of powerful messages communicated, for example, by corporate-controlled media has served to internalize these messages.

Financial markets that have been deregulated due to the pressures of structural greed have also led to a situation in which money and financial markets take on a life of their own, with the creation of an endless variety of new financial instruments for making quick, hyper profits. More than just a medium of exchange, money has become a commodity from which ever larger profits are promised and expected.

Buddhist and Christian understandings of greed

Buddhists understand greed as a human disposition, one of the Three Poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. Greed is a cause

of suffering and an obstacle to enlightenment. On the path toward enlightenment, human beings can overcome the overwhelming power of the Three Poisons and thereby become generous, loving and compassionate persons.

Christians understand that they live in structures of domination and greed, traditionally related to the power of sin. Since the time of the prophets, biblical faith resisted these oppressive structures and worked for legal and community related alternatives. Following in this tradition, Jesus Christ lived a life in opposition to the forces of domination and died in fierce struggle against these. In his resurrection, Christians believe that he was victorious over these structures and empowers his followers, through the Holy Spirit, to resist and transform similar structures today.

To avoid addressing structural greed and to focus on individual greed is to maintain the *status quo*. As Buddhists and Christians, we are convinced that greed has to be understood both personally and structurally. Individual and structural greed feed each other in their interactive relation of cause and effect. They need each other for their sustenance and expansion.

Self-interest, necessary for human well-being, does not necessarily constitute greed. Insofar as humans can survive and flourish only together with one another, self-interest naturally includes the interests of others. Therefore, when self-interest is pursued without compassion for others, when interconnectedness is disregarded or when the mutuality of all humanity is forgotten, greed results. With greed, whether personal or structural, there can never be enough.

Strategies for engaging structural greed

Greed is manifested at both the individual and social levels, as well as structurally through political, economic and media power. Each level requires transformation and needs a variety of strategies to be effective.

Strategies for addressing greed at the personal and social levels include promoting generosity and cultivating compassion for others. We encourage effective preaching and teaching as well as spiritual practices such as meditation and prayer to motivate Buddhists and Christians towards personal and social transformation.

Counteracting the structural greed embodied in political and economic power structures requires different strategies. They include instituting anti-greed measures, such as the development and enforcement of adequate regulation of financial transactions and policies that promote the equitable distribution of wealth.

Since market-driven global economies have become harmful to small businesses and devastating to local communities, efforts to create alternate economies at the local level must be encouraged. We identified four examples of such efforts from around the world: local exchange and trading system (LETS), in which trading is done in local and regional currencies; cooperative banking; decentralized energy; and localizing the production and exchange of basic commodities such as water and food.

As structural greed also threatens the earth's sustainability, we affirm the need to safeguard the "commons" for all people in participatory ways of organizing and managing the earth's resources.

These initiatives designed to transform structural greed cannot be instituted without

strategic, well-organized activist communities. We recognize that some of the best initiatives for such organizing often come from the experience and creativity of those on the margins. We also note that preaching and teaching, both in temple and church, can be effective ways of motivating people to participate in such organized communities. Collective power is enhanced when Buddhists and Christians work together; they are able to have an even more effective and constructive impact when they engage with other religious communities and grassroots civil society organizations and movements.

As Buddhists and Christians, we also affirm that meditation, prayer and other spiritual practices offer people access to spiritual power that gives them perseverance, release from their egos, compassion with those who suffer and the inner strength to love and deal non-violently with those who they have to oppose. As Buddhist teachers have reminded us: we must be peace in order to make peace.

Conclusion

As Buddhists and Christians from a variety of traditions in our respective religions and from many countries, we spent four days struggling with the question of engaging structural greed. Each one of us strove to share authentically from the perspective of our tradition and identity. We tried to listen deeply to each other, suspend judgment, appreciate each other's beliefs, be self-critical of our own beliefs and attentive to new insights.

This common word testifies to the value of such a dialogue. Our hope is that such ongoing interreligious engagement and cooperation can be a powerful contribution to overcoming greed and realizing a world of greater compassion, wisdom and justice.

Faith, Shared Wisdom and International Law

During October 3 – 7, 2010 I got a chance to attend the International Consultation on *Faith, Shared Wisdom and International Law* at Le Meridien Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I am grateful to Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa for proposing my name to the consultation organizers. The experience was eye opening, important for my future work, and gave me many opportunities to get to know religious leaders, scholars, government and NGO workers in the fields of religions, ethics, law, policy making, economics, and the environment.

The conference was a consultation of notable religious scholars from all over the world, who were invited to think together about how to create a more peaceful world. "Faith" in the title of the conference and in the following Global Action Plan refers to the embodiment of the heart and the divine. "Shared wisdom" refers, not to traditional knowledge, but rather to internal values which are not bound by time and space. According to the document on the same title as the conference, "[t]he endeavour to find common ethical ground holds the key to constructing a more peaceful and ecologically sustainable world order—a task that must be approached with new thinking and great urgency."

About 70 participants from various countries, such as South Africa, USA, Australia, England, India, Sri Lanka, China, Thailand and Malaysia attended the Consultation. Nine speakers including myself gave plenary addresses. All of us were invited to join three parallel working groups of 20-25 participants each. The groups deal with three topics as follows: (1) Peace mak-

ing and peace building, (2) Future of humanity and global environment, and (3) Religion and international law. I chose to attend the second group, which consisted of participants of diverse religious backgrounds, such as Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. There were also keynote speeches at luncheons and dinners by distinguished speakers such as His Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun, Grand Mufti of Syria, H.E General Olusegun Obasanjo, as well as by the Prime Minister of Malaysia Y.A.B Dato Sri Najib Tun Razak – read out by Datuk Seri Dr. Maximus Johnity Ongkili, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Three welcoming addresses were given on the 6th by three conveners, namely Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Judge Christopher Weeramanta and Professor Joseph Camilliari. According to Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, all the crises humanity is facing today are due to the lack of spiritual involvement in global systems—economics, environment, peace building, etc. He said the reasons why it is difficult to establish the spiritual and ethical involvement is because of four specific factors, namely (1) the ruling élites not valuing the values we cherish; (2) the world view that institutionalizes power and wealth; (3) the world view that does not recognize the role of spiritualism; and (4) religions themselves that have become obsessed with rituals, forms and symbols having nothing to do with environment, ethics and society. Many religions fall upon what is known as the "PP" (Punish and Punch) approach, and do not emphasize on the "EE" (Empower and Enlighten)

approach. Hence, what needs to be done are a revolution within the religions and social education at the widest extent so that it can bring about changes in people's mindset, and bridging the nexus among religious and ethical principles with laws and policies. He reminds us that we need these changes urgently because we are the whole human family that is in the midst of the crisis.

Judge Christopher Weeramanta urged us to incorporate religious values in solving present day problems. He cited examples from his book *Tread Lightly on the Earth*, which drew insights from many religions and global traditions, such as Africa and the native Aborigines. As a lawyer, he focused on having universal declarations which will act as international law. He also urged us to think not only of the present but also of the future generations. Professor Joseph Camilliari called upon the need of spiritual and ethical values in confronting changing situations. As he put it, "For religions, we do not turn to doctrines and dogma; instead, we turn to deeper spiritual insights for guidance."

Mr. Malcom Fraser, Australia's former Prime Minister, also talked about human responsibility and human rights. He discussed the duty of the UN and shared with us his experiences working with Australia and Southeast Asia. He stressed the need for moral values from families to be accepted by everyone and the need to cooperate among spiritual traditions.

In terms of law, Prof. Kamali gave us many interesting insights. He talked about human dignity, justice and pluralism. We need open declaration beyond creed and age, he said, as well as respect

of human dignity since the moment of birth. He shared some insights from Islam. Humanity must share the same ethical ideals, and judge themselves and others on the same principle. He urged us not to use religion as a tool to separate peoples.

According to the Grand Mufti of Syria, religion is a form of relation between the soul and the rest of the universe built upon love. He pointed out that one of our problems today is not religion as such but the problem of leaders of religions. Regarding the law, he said, whether we like it or not, we need to conform to the law. In Syria he is in a position of changing the law. When he came to Malaysia, he had to conform to this country's law. Anyway, he said he did not carry law with him wherever he goes but faith is always in his heart. In another talk, he condemned the waste of money in building many temples. Instead, the money should be used to feed hungry children. He urged us to accept diversity without discrimination.

My own paper talks about threats to environment using some episodes of my own experiences running a retreat center in the forests in Thailand. It discusses Buddhist values to the environment and what we can do to protect nature and save it for future generations. Among the values discussed are humbleness to nature, compassion for all living beings, recognition of interdependence of all things, and respect of human potentials to solve problems.

In the three working groups, we had to synthesize and come up with concrete ideas to take things forward. Each group had a convener who presented reports on what had emerged in the discussions based on the plenary discussions.

I attended the working group on environment. Among the topics we discussed were many aspects of challenges to the

environment, including biophysical pollution, resource depletion, behavioral, education and public health and environmental disaster. Our proposed solution was to create a new ethics based on *trusteeship*, which commits us to bear responsibility for other fellow beings and to treat all humans humanely. The group recognizes interconnectedness and interdependence of lives and all elements in nature. It abides by the principle that all people have access to the world's resources that that the international community needs to ensure common action regarding preventing the threats to the environment.

The other groups were the working groups on building a more peaceful world and on integrating a common world ethic into the work of international institutions. The peace building group agreed on ethical principles in preventing war and reducing damage caused by war. The group agreed on some core values such as all humans must be treated humanely, dignity of human persons including ethnic groups; no one has the right to kill or torture, and no nation has the right to engage in genocide or ethnic cleansing. Propagation of religion must reduce hatred and the international community has responsibility to support for peace.

The group on ethics and law believes that the values and principles that form part of a common world ethics should be more effectively integrated into the work of the UN system and major international legal institutions. This can be done in diverse ways, namely by making more extensive use of the educative role UN agencies and programs, by requesting UNDP to consider funding such educational projects, by helping to establish a World Forum of eminent persons, comprising religious scholars, legal experts and former

political leaders, which would consider ways in which international law bodies could more systematically incorporate the agreed values and principles that form part of a common world ethic, by asking the International Law Commission to undertake further study on this issue and to recommend to the UN General Assembly, and by requesting national governments to identify ministries which would liaise through the UN.

On the last day the Consultation participants succeeded in drafting a Global Action Plan, which draws its inspiration from the moral wisdom shared by the world's religious and ethical traditions. It supports the draft Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities and enshrines the golden rule: "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to others." The Consultation recommend that the Secretary General will act to advance acceptance of a statement of shared ethical values; and that the document would be introduced into the General Assembly for debate and adoption. It would request the Secretary General to:

1. Use and advance the recommendations of this Consultation to strengthen the UN and the Security Council's search for the preservation of peace and for the outlawing of war.
2. Use the full force of his office to achieve acceptance of the shared core values and responsibilities supported by the world's religions as enunciated with clarity in the draft Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities prepared over 20 years by the InterAction Council. The Consultation urges the draft Universal Declaration of Human Re-

sponsibilities be introduced into the General Assembly for acceptance and adoption.

3. Having in mind the urgency created by the possibility of nuclear war and of global warming, initiate substantial steps consistent with recommendations of this Consultation to protect that environment and the

planet for the benefit of all people.

4. Use the authority of his office to encourage all countries to heed this call; to recognize the urgency of the situation caused by uncontrolled nuclear proliferation and its linkages with the environment; and advance urgent and effective action.

It is agreed that the participants of the Consultation take ownership of the document with the sense of responsibility to implement in letter and spirit the Global Action Plan, which will be executed under the oversight of the Implementation Committee.

Kuala Lumpur Conference Report
Krisadawan Hongladarom
 The Thousand Stars Foundation

30th Anniversary of Right Livelihood Award : Youth Conference

Around August, Ajahn Sulak told me about the youth conference, which is linked to the Right Livelihood Award 30th Anniversary event. At first, I was excited, not exactly because of the conference, but the opportunity to travel. Of course, I wanted to participate in an international youth conference, but my imagination didn't depict it as the most "fun" thing to do in Europe. I wrote a proposal to the conference organizers and they accepted me and agreed to cover my traveling cost.

Together, Ajahn and I arrived in Frankfurt and took a train a little further to Bad Godesburg to visit one of his oldest friends, a retired ambassador, Reinhard Schlaginweit. We all had a nice walk together around the town. During the walk, he talked to me about the history of the town, philosophy and his life. It was a surprise to hear that he and his wife fell in love for the first time, while walking together in forest talking about astrology! On that night, we had dinner together in the Bad Godesburg Castle and there was an elevator attached to this historical building. We all had deer steak with German Riesling. It was my first and best dinner of the trip.

On the second day, Reinhard dropped us at the venue of the Right Livelihood Award event. I had to separate from Ajahn there, as my conference was located at a youth hostel, which was approximately 40 minutes away. Luckily, there were two girls, daughters of RLA laureates heading to the hostel, so I followed them, otherwise I would have no idea of reaching there. While, traveling to the hostel, I began to day-dream about Berlin already, thinking that the conference was probably not going to be so entertaining.

I arrived at the hostel, a bit dazed and confused, as people were busy talking and attending talks. The first talk I hurried to was given by a woman working for a foundation. She was talking about lobbying politicians and government officials. I was honestly bored by the content and its process, which seemed to give the whole concern to the policy and the system. I was a bit frightened, that the rest of the week will be like this.

After the talk, they gave me a room key and I found out my other three roommates were girls. That is rather a surprise!

At my first lunch in the con-

ference, people still seemed to be distant and closed. In my mind, I expected more international participants, but they were mostly German. I was the only Asian, not including several Indian participants. So I started to talk to a Tunisian young man who was studying Engineering. Although, he couldn't communicate through English much, we seemed to understand each other with the help of our hand signs. Somehow, we ended up talking about spirituality and agreeing that Germany seems to lack of. There was another German boy sitting there, seemingly interested about our conversation. So we introduced ourselves and left for the next session of talk.

After listening to three talks, it was time to eat again. At dinner I met Simeon again, the boy I met at lunch. His English is understandable, not yet fluent. As he was one of the first people to talk to me, I decided to give him a palm reading; he was quite excited. He told me that he is the only person staying in his room. I found the room organization a bit strange. So I decided to move to Simeon's room as it is less crowded and more comfortable gender-wise.

There was one more talk

after the dinner. It was given by an RLA laureate. I found that the talks on the first day were rather conventional. During the last talk, one energetic young man abruptly challenged the speaker's idea. I thought that it was quite rude and attention seeking.

After the talk, I went to the garden to relax after a long tiring day of concentration. There I met Simeon again, smoking self-rolled cigarette and he blamed for the Russian cold weather for making him start smoking. Not long after, the boy who challenged the speaker turned up and said hello. His name was Azaad, half-Persian half-German. He enthusiastically talked about his thoughts and his passion for philosophy. So he asked me, "What's your idea?" So I bragged in return "My idea is not to think, I don't want thoughts to limit my perception of the world." (Obviously, it was an idealistic thing to say, but not so practical.) He seemed a bit surprised and asked "Don't you love thinking; the intellectual orgasm is awesome, man!" So he invited me to sit down in a bar and bought me a bottle of beer and the conversation was joined by another young man, Alex. That night we talked from critical theory to hyperreality of Jean Baudrillard and Azaad's spiritual experience of selflessness though eating an intoxicating mushroom in a secret cult meeting.

The rest of the week passed by quickly, as the schedule was filled with talks and discussions. People were young and passionate. Many were interesting and unique. Some have volunteered in South America, some in Africa. Some played music, some wanted to do law, some wanted to be doctors and many wanted to study sociology. Many of them smoked. Every break, they smoked. Simeon's English was getting more fluent equivalent to the increasing numbers of



cigarettes he smoked everyday, even though he stated "If you are honest to yourself, this thing tastes very bad". Alex's and Azaad's discussions were becoming more and more passionate. They were musing and traveling to another realm of thoughts and "intellectual fantasy".

Later in the week, after talking with Alex for a while, I discovered that he can play music, not just music, but jazz! We started to talk enthusiastically about the subject, but also discovered the he was in quite a similar boat with me. He said he didn't want to do music in university, even though he is talented. He was depressed and confused with life for a year, as his parents expected him to embark on his development of musical skills. However, he wanted to do philosophy, he loved thinking.

Alex showed me his recording. He played piano and sang. His singing is perfect, not out of tune at all and very natural. I said that I was jealous of his ability. He replied "We are all jealous of others' abilities." I asked him what he wanted. "To be able to think more systematically." In my mind, that was the last thing I would ask for.

Before, music was something I was intoxicated by. The sounds and emotions it created used to give me emotional pleasure, but in the past two years the magic has been fading. Now music is just mere sounds and constructions of notes. I nearly

took law as a university course just for the sake of getting a degree to please my family. However, I had paper work problem at the university registration and decided to give music another chance. Even though, we claimed that we have lost faith and inspirations in music, we were humming and singing jazz standards with joy. At the ending party of the conference we played together for the first time, improvising in F blues with the melody of "Billie Bounce" by Charlie Parker.

The most radical and interesting talk I listened to was given by Rosalie Bertrell. She talked to us about how the US military started to produce their missiles with nuclear waste in the first Gulf War. Because of its radioactivity, it had a very high melting point and would evaporate anything that it destroyed. (A piece of metal would turn into gas!) It is a very devastating weapon, not only to the enemy, but their own troops and the whole area surrounding the war zone. Not only that, she claimed that the military of both USA and Russia have been and are experimenting with the weather manipulation, causing unpredictable climate change and ozone hole. And they blame us for using refrigerators and deodorant spray?

The conference ended quickly. I met many wonderful souls, who have the urge to do something better for the world. Not just wonderful, but also interesting!

Polapat Jittivuthikan

Draft Appeal Against the Administrative Court's Decision to the Highest Administrative Court

The primary reason why the police confiscated the book *A Quarter of a Century of Thai Democracy: A Path Filled with Obstacles* was due to the chapter entitled "Reflections on the Sixtieth Anniversary Celebrations of His Majesty's Accession to the Throne". In reality, this chapter is included in Part I of the book which concerns "The Monarchy and the Constitution". The police did not take this context into consideration. And the plaintiff opens Part I of the book with a quote in English by Vernon Bogdanor, whose book *The Monarchy and the Constitution* is considered to be a required reading for anyone interested in this matter. The quote states:

Monarchy, like other political institutions, rest upon a social base. If the nature of that base changes, so also will there be change in the constitutional conventions and relationships which effect the monarchy. Today, monarchy has to accommodate itself to a society which has ceased to venerate tradition, much less to regard it as a source of legitimacy, and a society in which deference is no longer a significant factor in politics.

Prohibiting public criticisms of the monarchy will not make them go away. Rather they will be driven underground and will take far more insidious forms.

The plaintiff would like to appeal against the decision of the Administrative Court, in particular the section from page 16, line ten, to page 17, line ten. The court's decision can be roughly summarized as follows. The plaintiff has written an essay that deals with and is critical of the monarchy in many inappropriate ways. Parts of the essay contain contents with ambiguous meanings and words

and phrases with various connotations, especially the section on the death of King Rama VIII. In writing in this manner, the real intention of the plaintiff is held in suspect. If the essay is publicly circulated, readers may misunderstand it in ways that are detrimental to the monarchy. The plaintiff cannot argue that he is merely asserting historical facts and exercising the freedom of expression with the sincere intention of preserving the monarchy due to the following reasons. The monarchy has long been respected and worshipped by Thais. It has also long served as the "unifying factor." The constitution explicitly states that the king occupies a revered position in the country and therefore cannot be offended. The plaintiff is a Thai and a loyal subject. He could not refer to constitutional rights to express opinions, speak, write, publish, advertise, or signify in any way that antagonizes the monarchy. The plaintiff well recognized this fact, and therefore it was mentioned in the essay that he had been thrice charged with lese majeste and that he might land in hot waters again by writing it. In the note at the end of the essay, it was also mentioned that no magazine or journal would publish it. This underscores the fact that the plaintiff understood the tradition and value system of Thai society. Yet he still persisted in writing what he did. What he has done is therefore against the value system of Thai society and against the constitution, which seeks to protect the sanctity of the king.

Concerning the argument in the court's decision that the essay contains ambiguous messages, especially pertaining to the death of King Rama VIII, thereby throwing the plaintiff's loyalty to the monarchy into doubt, the

following response is to be made. The court must differentiate between the Monarchy and the King. Constitutional law only protects the King, the Queen, and the Crown Prince. It does not mention about the Monarchy as an institution. If we cannot criticize any institution, then we must be living in an authoritarian state.

It must be clear that the king in the time of absolute monarchy is necessarily different from the king in the time of democracy. The latter merely occupies the position as head of state. The latter is not 'God King' (as in Brahmanism) but simply elected king (as in Buddhism); that is, an ordinary human being. According to the law of impermanence, the monarchy must adapt itself to the changing conditions of contemporary society. Any institution that can only be exalted and never criticized is going against the time. It will not be able to survive. The monarchies in Persia, Greece, and more recently Nepal did not survive because they failed to adapt to changing times. The demise of the monarchies in Russia and Germany also serves as exemplary cases of this failure. When the Romanov dynasty fell King Rama VI asked one of his brothers who was studying in Russia about its causes. The prince responded that although the Tsar was a good person he lacked *kalyanamitta*. In other words, the Tsar only listened to the advices of the conservatives and the reactionaries who were in favor of absolutism. He did not listen to progressive voices who criticized royal activities and practices. This seems to be an important but forgotten lesson.

As for Germany, the lese majeste law became most draconian near the end of absolutism. It was during this period that the

greatest number of people was charged with lese majeste. Yet, the monarchy was unable to stave off its decline and eventual demise.

The plaintiff is widely known domestically as well as internationally as a public intellectual who has attempted to protect the Thai monarchy for four decades. The plaintiff is known for his role as a loyal critic of the monarchy. He sees the monarchy as the most important institution of the country. Each time the plaintiff was charged with lese majeste, it was primarily due to the political opportunism of political and military figures who wanted to silence or weaken their political opponents.

The plaintiff first faced the charge of lese majeste in 1984. It was brought about by General Arthit Kamlangake, the then Supreme Commander of the Arm Forces and commander in chief of the army. It concerned the book *Lork Krab Sangkhom Thai* (Unmasking Thai Society) written by the plaintiff. The plaintiff was charged with lese majeste even before the said book came out of the printing house. General Arthit used this lese majeste case as part of his attempt to topple General Prem Tinasulanond, the then prime minister. The case was brought before the military court. However, General Prem later received a royal order asking the attorney general to drop the charge.

In 1991 the plaintiff was accused of lese majeste for the second time. This time it was General Suchinda Kraprayoon who filed the charge against him. The General also accused the plaintiff of defaming him. The plaintiff had earlier called the seizure of state power by the National Peace Keeping Council, which was headed by General Suchinda, a heinous act. The plaintiff had to spend four years to fight the charge before being acquitted. A crucial section of the final court decision is reproduced below:

After considering the statements of the witnesses for both the defense and prosecution, and the

complete transcripts of the defendant's speech, most fairminded people would question why the defendant had been charged, what was the defendant's intention, and toward whom was his public talk directed. We cannot only consider literally what he said. We can see clearly that the intention of the talk was to make the students and the people aware so they would be awakened to resist the unjust authority of the NPKC [National Peace-keeping Council] in seizing power from an elected government and its attempts to prolong its hold on power. The talk also tried to clarify the basic principles of democracy, liberty, and equality of the people. No group should use the monarch to serve their own political purposes, and the military groups which have seized power have violated these basic principles throughout the history of Thai democracy.

The wording in the disputed sentences is strong, impolite and inappropriate. However, when we look at the whole context of the talk and not only parts of it, we can clearly see that the intention of the defendant was to give a talk that was respectful and loyal to the monarchy. He did not want any group of people to abuse the monarchy for political purposes. Accordingly, what the prosecution refers to as constituting lese majeste is not reasonable and contradicts the truth. The evidence is not strong enough to find the defendant guilty of lese majeste. (Decision of the Criminal Court, 26 April 1995)

The present Administrative Court however did not give weight to this precedent decision, insisting that it pertained to an entirely different matter and occasion.

It was during the Thaksin Shinawatra premiership that the plaintiff was charged with lese majeste for the third time. The present prime minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, has set up a commission chaired by the permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice to carefully go through each lese

majeste case. The objective is to separate cases that were politically motivated (i.e., where lese majeste was used to destroy political opponents) from those in which it was clear that the aim was to antagonize the king. The plaintiff has also been informed that in a meeting of the Senate committee on law enforcement for the protection of the monarchy the prevailing opinion was that the plaintiff was a loyal subject and that any lese majeste charge against him should be dropped. These efforts seem to be in line with the king's wish. In a royal speech, the king once stated, "If the king is violated, the king himself is in trouble ...in trouble in many ways. One, foreigners say in Thailand one can't criticize the king, that if they can't criticize and go to jail. There are some who go to jail, which troubles the king, who must say, after the jailing, to forgive them for insulting me severely. Farangs say in Thailand, when the king gets insulted, [the offender] must go to jail."

The plaintiff raises the three abovementioned cases to show that he had been unjustly persecuted by dishonest politicians. If the police felt that the essay contains messages that defamed or that sought to antagonize the king, why didn't they immediately arrest the plaintiff? Why did they only confiscate his book?

In its decision, the Administrative Court did not point out which sentences in the essay that were deemed inappropriate, too ambiguous, potentially threatening to the king, opened to multiple interpretations, and so on. In particular, it did not explain why it was inappropriate for the plaintiff to mention about the case of King Rama VIII's death in his essay and why this was considered antagonistic to the king.

As for the point that no one wanted to publish the said essay, the plaintiff has already informed the court in his oral closing statement that an English version of the essay appeared in *Seeds of Peace* magazine. The point is this: why didn't it bother the court that

no one in the mainstream mass media possessed sufficient moral courage to publish the plaintiff's essay? The mainstream mass media are also too afraid to publish the photographs of the four sons of the Crown Prince. The plaintiff had published the princes' photos. They were also handed to the court as part of the case materials. Why was it wrong or inappropriate to publish these photos? The plaintiff pointed out that these four princes were or were not counted as royal grandchildren. Again, what was wrong with mentioning this fact?

The plaintiff had written a letter to *Thai Post* newspaper protesting its support for the nomination of MR Kukrit Pramoj's name to UNESCO to be recognized as one of the world's leading personalities. This nomination was part of a project to commemorate his 100th birth anniversary. The plaintiff straightforwardly argued that he was a dishonest person who committed the grave offense of plagiarism. In other words, nominating his name to UNESCO would make the country a laughing stock of the world.

The editor of *Thai Post* wouldn't publish the plaintiff's letter. He merely said that the issue was already passé. The plaintiff

had also criticized Khunying Kaisri Saengarun, the then minister of culture, who was responsible for the nomination of Kukrit's name to UNESCO. This led her brother, who controlled *Matichon* and *Khao Sod* newspapers and *Art and Culture* magazine, to blacklist the plaintiff from publishing in these media. Whenever the plaintiff made it to the news, these media would not even mention about it. Is it proper for the media to do so? Do the mainstream mass media uphold the basic ethics of journalism? Are they upholding the freedom of expression and the right to opinion? In sum, the fact that no one in the mainstream mass media would publish the said essay did not necessarily mean that its contents were inappropriate or contradictory to Thai values. Even Noam Chomsky, the foremost public intellectual in the US, has had difficulties in publishing his work in the mainstream mass media.

It is the responsibility of the intellectual to criticize society in order to uphold truth and justice. In so doing, it is necessary for the intellectual to contest the popular beliefs and practices of the people. If these habits are not contested and transformed then real freedom in society cannot be attained.

For several decades, the plaintiff has striven to be a responsible public intellectual. It began in 1963 during the Sarit Thanarat dictatorship with the publication of the *Social Science Review*, which promoted the causes of independence and freedom. Quite a number of historians of contemporary Thai politics has affirmed that the *Social Science Review* was the intellectual fountainhead of the 14 October 1973 mass movement that nonviolently toppled the dictatorship in the country.

The plaintiff wishes to emphasize that if the criticisms made by him pertaining to the monarchy especially those that are developed in the chapters "The Role of the Monarchy and Democracy" and "The Monarchy and the Constitution" of the confiscated book are given serious consideration then the monarchy will likely be able to survive well into the future. We live in a country that calls itself a constitutional monarchy—in which the king is under the constitution. We should be true to the name of our political regime.

26 August, 2010

Buddhism Is More than Meditation: A Conversation with Sulak Sivaraksa

Sulak Sivaraksa, Buddhist spiritual leader and international activist, is known for advocating social change and development based on an engaged Buddhism. Over the course of his long career, he has been arrested three times for his criticism of the Thai monarchy. Katherine Marshall sat down with him recently to discuss his own spiritual journey and his vision for Buddhism.

Can you speak a bit about how you got where you are, and particu-

larly about how faith came into play in your life?

I was born in 1933, and was brought up as a Buddhist. My parents were not very spiritual. I was sent to a Catholic school, and I got my degree from the Anglican college. I didn't like the school. They used to treat me very badly; and they used to beat me because I didn't want to learn by rote. My parents said, "We have tried to bring you up in a Catholic and a Protestant school. Would you like to be a monk?" I said "Yes, why not?"

So I became a monk at the age of thirteen. As a monk, they treat you as a grown up. It was the first time I was able to connect with and learn about my society and my culture, because the temple was open for everyone. I was very happy.

In 1953, I went to London to study. In our family background, which was middleclass and upperclass, being educated in Britain meant that you were educated properly, and that could help you get ahead. England was the place to be. While I was in England, I

joined the Buddhist Society; Mr. Christmas Humphreys, founder of the Society, was a very great man.

But I did not agree with his approach. His view was that a Buddhist must concentrate on meditation, even when they are part of the society. He said that Christian men are wrong because they got involved in society and politics, and lost their spirituality. To be Buddhist, he argued, you must concentrate on meditation. I felt that he was fundamentally wrong. Meditation is a good thing, but it does not mean only looking inwards. I realized that many Buddhists were from middleclass backgrounds. They didn't realize the suffering of the majority of our people. They didn't even question their own lifestyles. I think that is escapism, not Buddhism.

And what came next?

I returned from England to Siam in 1961. Probably because of my British education, I was very much influenced by Plato. In *The Republic*, he argued that we should all become philosopher kings, and that we should lead the poor. At first, when I went home to Siam, I thought the poor were so stupid and ignorant. But when I was exposed to them, I realized that I had much to learn from them and that they had much wisdom to share with me. Ever since my return to Siam, I have become more and more involved with the poor.

To make a long story short, I feel that to practice Buddhism, you must care not only for yourself but for society. To be Buddhist, you should not only adhere to the main teachings — not killing, stealing, having sexual misconducts, or lying — but you also have to consciously distance yourself from the structures of violence that frame our lives. You may not kill directly, but you kill through the social structure. You don't steal directly, but you let the bank steal. So, I became more involved in addressing what you could term structural violence.

Last year you celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. What were some of the highlights?

A real highlight was to see and to build networks of friendships. In Buddhism, the main priority, externally, are good friends. Good friends are those who tell you what you don't want to hear. They are your external voice of conscience. I feel we have done that for 20 years.

We have also worked to develop an important side of Buddhism. Some Buddhists — for example, the Japanese — are wonderful with funerals and with thinking of the next world, but they have no care for the present world. Now they care more for the present world, and I am happy for that. The Taiwanese Buddhists have begun to help the poor in Bangladesh and Cambodia. I say that's good but not good enough. To help the poor is social welfare, but Buddhism demands social change. I think the Taiwanese are doing that, and I am very proud that the anniversary sees us with good friends who are challenging each other in good spirit, while we are changing.

When you look at the Buddhist establishments in Thailand, and the monks and the structures, how much of that would you say is engaged and how much of it is in a more traditional role?

The Thai monks, as a whole, cannot be completely traditional. We have been uprooted, if I may say so, because of the American hegemony. The Americans came in during the 1950's to save us from Communism. They felt that Buddhism was not good because it does not teach about God, but teaches about contentment. They thought that Buddhism was all negative. I said: no sir. No to hatred, no to greed.

They came to our country with good intentions. But they wanted us to become industria-

lized, and destroyed our whole agricultural system. Traditional Buddhism depends on farming, which was destroyed. Now, there is a new group of monks who go along with and rely on capitalism and consumerism.

Having said that, there are also some young monks who feel they must go back to the traditional Buddha. They try to understand suffering, and to see greed in the form of capitalism. They try to understand violence, hatred, ignorance, and illusion in the forms of mass media and industry. There are more and more young people who are very helpful and work with us in Laos, Cambodia, Burma, India, and Sri Lanka.

But they are a minority?

Yes. But, small is beautiful. And I believe that quality is more important than quantity.

What about interfaith work?

Friendship has no barriers, whether gender, nationality, or faiths. Friends are friends. The Christian, the Muslim, or the Atheist — they are friends. Friends must not belittle each other's beliefs. My teacher taught that, to understand the basis of Buddhism, you have to know that there are a lot of dreadful things in Buddhism, also. He taught that Buddhism is how to learn how to change greed into generosity, hatred into compassion and friendship, delusion into wisdom and understanding. He said that other religions are the same but use different terms. They teach people to be selfless, not selfish. They teach to be brave, humble, and generous. Don't think that other religions are inferior to your own. Respect other religions as your own. Buddha-dasa, my teacher, taught me that we must unite people of different faiths — whether agnostic, or atheist — because they are also spiritual beings.

Katherine Marshall

An Interview with Sulak Sivaraksa

This interview with Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa was conducted by Professor R. Manivannan at Bangkok on 4th July 2010. A Tamil version of this interview in abstract was published in a Tamil Weekly *Junior Viketan* in August 2010.

Sulak Sivaraksa is the initiator of a number of social, humanitarian, ecological and spiritual movements and organizations in Thailand, like the College SEM (Spirit in Education Movement). Sulak Sivaraksa is one of the founding fathers of INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists), which was established in 1989 with leading Buddhists such as the 14th Dalai Lama, the Vietnamese monk and peace-activist Thich Nhat Hanh and the Theravada Bhikkhu Maha Ghosananda as its patrons. Sulak Sivaraksa was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize (Right Livelihood Award) in 1995. He was awarded the UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization) award in 1998, and the Indian 'Millennium Gandhi Award' in 2001. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee in 1994. Sulak was chair of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development and has been a visiting professor at UC Berkeley, the University of Hawaii and Cornell. Sulak Sivaraksa was one of the panel (JURY) members of the PERMANENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL IN DUBLIN ON SRI-LANKA held in January 14-16, 2010.

Ramu Manivannan is a professor in political science teaching in the University of Madras. He is an activist-scholar

engaged in peace and conflict resolution work at the grass-roots. He has been associated with the issues concerning the refugee communities from Tibet, Burma and Sri Lanka. He is also engaged in experiments in holistic education and alternative development practices. He is also associated with several international peace and human rights forums. He is the founder of 'Buddha Smiles' Programme on Peace, Education & Development. He has founded an alternative school 'Garden of Peace' for the rural poor in Tamil Nadu, India.

R. Manivannan: My humble respects to you and I am deeply grateful that you have consented to speak on the Sri Lankan Tamil question. I have [a few] questions to ask and seek your position. My first question is about the Tamils' struggle for justice and equality in Sri Lankan political situation. It has been long for over sixty years now the Tamils have been struggling for Justice, but now we find a situation where everything seems to have been resolved through military means. So, this is a kind of status which is of deep concern for all of us around the world. I would like to seek your insights about the Tamil question both historically and in contemporary situation as it prevails in Sri Lanka.

Sulak Sivaraksa: Well, I don't know a great deal about the history but you can take it in two periods. There is a Sinhalese point of view. Whatever has happened, at least Sri Lankan Tamils have been there for a long time, at least for one thousand

years. Then after occupation the British also imported the Tamils to work on plantation....[T]he British brought the Tamils over and Tamils had been working hard and of course this is partly British imperialism they were always bringing people who would work hard everywhere.

RM: Do you have some reflections on the peace process in the last ten years, at least since 2002, the peace processes initiated in Sri Lanka which meant that the conflict was going to be resolved through a negotiated political settlement?

SS: Yes, I met the Norwegian government but of course they have good will but they don't know very much about Sri Lankan culture. Good will, of course but nothing really became resolved. I was involved a little bit. I was asked by the International Peace Brigades at regular intervals. Then the Tamils in exile asked me. They said that I am a Buddhist and some of the Sinhala Buddhists have been very militant. Since I am Buddhist and have seen the monks who are very vocal against the Tamils, I even took them for meditation practice, so on and so forth. Ultimately my mission failed. Then of course there were a lot of killings later on. Even the Sinhalese got killed by the very militant Sinhala with Buddhist-JVP. They came to us. They came to our Ashram. You see there is a big building called Lanka building. I welcomed them. They stayed with us some years before they got back to their country. So I played a very small role in helping them but as far

as the government is concerned the question is beyond me. In fact...the Sri Lankan ambassador here tried to get me involved with the peace process as the Norwegians had earlier requested but at that time I was teaching at Harvard and Smith College. I could not help them.

RM: As you are fully aware of the Sri Lankan government's military solution, do you believe that the military solution will bring a lasting contribution to the resolution of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka?

SS: I don't know really but I feel very sad. The Sinhalese felt that this was their great victory which makes me feel sadder. That's why when I was on the Tribunal (*Permanent People's Tribunal in Dublin on Sri Lanka held between 14-16 January 2010*) I added my personal comment asking the Sinhalese Buddhists not to feel victorious. We should feel sorry and asked for forgiveness from the Tamils. Only from forgiveness and love on both sides, things could perhaps be resolved. But if one side thinks that we are victorious and the other side being defeated, I think, that there is not going to be a long term solution. This is in fact the position of the President (of Sri Lanka)....

RM: Liberation Tamils Tigers Eelam (LTTE) is only one segment of Tamil society or part of the larger Tamil movement for justice which under circumstances assumed the leadership of the Tamil community. But, this war that was carried out by the Sri Lankan government was against the entire Tamil population, not only against the LTTE. This is my impression that the Sri Lankan govern-

ment's war was carried deep into the Tamil ethnicity question. Could you share your reflections on this posture?

SS: Unfortunately yes....If you go right back to *Mahavamsa* in your history, the Tamils are supposed to be bad people because they are not Buddhists. If we make Buddhism very narrow, it is very much against the teachings of the Buddha....

RM: There is another historical and cultural truth that I want to share with you. The Tamils and the people on the east coast of India have also been under the enormous influence of Buddhism and the teachings of the Buddha. There are sufficient historical and cultural evidence to this effect. There are still many historical extracts to the prevalence of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu and in the south. But to locate this war between Tamils who are Hindus and Christians and Sinhalese who are Buddhists seems to me a pervasion of the complete mindset against humanity in the name of religious and ethnic identities.

SS: Yes, even in Sri Lanka itself, the Sinhalese who are Buddhists are also partly Hindus. There are common references and beliefs among the Buddhist people in Sri Lanka with the Tamil people in terms of idol worship and celebration of festivals. And yet when it comes to recognizing you as Hindu, you are bad. I think it is very unfortunate. They use religion and ethnicity to kill people....

RM: In final stages of the war between LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces there were at least 40,000 people killed. Between the evening of 9th and

the morning of 10th May 2009 there were 2000 people killed. There was bloodbath within the so called "safe zone". From 11th May 2009 to 16th May 2009 there were at least 20,000 civilians killed. This doesn't seem like a war between two armed groups alone. You can see the working of hatred and the prevalence of the bitter truth of ethnicity as a target. What is your reflection on this?

SS: I feel that this is an act of great shame. That is why I was proud to serve on the Tribunal. We got lot of witnesses and we held for three days. They (LTTE) have been defeated already and there was no need to kill the civilians. They have not been treated well either....[H]ow could human beings do that to fellow human beings?...In Buddhism we are all related and we believe that other persons may have been our mothers in our past lives....

RM: It is also a great political message and also extremely sad for the global community including the Tamils all over the world to witness the internment of 300,000 civilians.... This was happening, on the one hand, during the final stages of the war. On the other hand, there was a huge celebration in the rest of the country. These two realities of the country and the sufferings of the Tamil community made me think that Sri Lanka is imprisoning itself or it is at least imprisoning its own people if it is still committed to the idea that the Tamils also belong to that country. I am not certain about the reconciliation process or what is going to take place in that country. What do you think about the way forward in Sri Lanka.?

SS: Well, when I look at South Africa...they stood for truth and reconciliation. Reconciliation will not take place unless you speak the truth. The government must admit its wrongs. Don't hide. This is what our Tribunal had made it clear. The Sri Lankan government must accept that they have done wrong and also seek for forgiveness.

RM: Do you think it will ever happen in Sri Lanka given the nature and history of the Sri Lankan leadership?

SS: Unfortunately, my plea will be ignored because of the claim of sovereignty and national pride....Unfortunately more governments will back the Sri Lankan government including the US, the UK and so on. Governments have become more oppressive and they don't care....They worship money and power. They don't care about the people and I hope this paradigm will shift. I hope the people will fight by themselves particularly, the grassroots....In Sri Lanka when the President (Mahinda Rajapaksa) won the election the first thing he did was to go to China because the Chinese gave a lot of money. In a way Sri Lanka is slowly coming under Chinese imperialism.... They only want power. They should know that power doesn't last forever. He is not a good example of a Buddhist. Ashoka who killed several thousand people in the battle of Kalinga changed his mind to pursue the path of the Dharma. I hope Mr. President after having killed so many Tamils will reflect and become a man of peace not a hypocrite. Sri Lanka does not need to be only the land of Buddhism but the land of the Buddha—the land of enlighten-

ment, the land of awakening. The land of Buddha means that it embraces Hindus, Christians and Muslims not only Buddhists. That's what Ashoka did when he was emperor.
....

RM: Can you tell us your role in the Permanent People's Tribunal held in Dublin this year and your engagements and experiences of processing the truth?

SS: The Permanent People's Tribunal consists of people from different nationalities and diverse political, socio-cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds. The biggest challenge was that the Tribunal had to function with the principle of unanimity. It was not easy to arrive at. We had ensured that justice was done without any bias or prejudice. We also wanted to address justice with compassion.

RM: Unanimity is a very big achievement of this People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka. So, what are the unanimous decisions of the Jury?

SS: You can read the published report which can be summarized in four points: 1. The Sri Lankan government is guilty of war crimes. 2. The Sri Lankan government is guilty of war against humanity. 3. The charge of genocide requires further investigation. And 4. The international community, particularly the U.K. and the U.S.A., shares responsibility for the break down for the peace process.) These four conclusions were cited in the summary report on *the Permanent People's Tribunal* held in Dublin and published in *Seeds of Peace*,

Vol.26 No.2, May-August 2010. We did have some difficulties in reaching and applying the principle of unanimity. There were challenges in regard to the task of protecting the identity of the witnesses.
....

RM: Is there any message for the Tamils in Sri Lanka and how they can fight for their political rights, equality, dignity and justice under the present circumstances?

SS: Well, as you know the President during his election campaign tried to woo the Tamils' vote also. I think the Tamils should always be cautious. They are in the minority and the present President will make use of the government and divide the people on ethnic grounds to resolve issues. Tamils will have to remain careful but at the same time they should be proud of their heritage, language, culture, and literature. They should also try to foster friendship with the Sinhalese. And also build relationship with non-Sri Lankans. You need to win friends from all over the world. If you adhere more to non-violence, adhere more to the truth then you will have good friends internationally. I think that will also protect you.... This problem cannot be resolved at the top and the resolution can take place only at the grassroots and at the middle. People of different religions should also join hands working together not only for this cause. For the sake of those who are more deprived than us, we should unite together and work for others.

Ramu Manivannan



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Invitation of International Working Group for Jan Satyagraha 2012

Date : 11 December, 2010

To,
Mr Sulak Sivaraksa
Thailand

Dear Sulak Ji

Greetings from Ekta Parishad, India.

Ekta Parishad's vision is an India where every person has secure and equal access to land, forest and water resources. An India where one's tribe or caste has no bearing on one's right to the dignity that land ownership and control over natural resources offers and where community based economic systems enable local self-sufficiency. A pro-poor model of development and a national land reform policy that puts the rights of marginalized and vulnerable communities at the forefront of its design is essential for the people of India to enjoy the constitutional rights guaranteed to each citizen. Ekta Parishad will achieve this mandate by adhering to the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and non-violent civil disobedience and by working as a people's movement to promote global awareness and cooperation. Ekta Parishad aims to inspire national and international commitments to solve these problems by following the principles of truth and non-violence. Our role is to hold those in power accountable; to ensure that the marginalized people of the world be given a platform to voice their concerns and be heard. A people's struggle that is united across borders has the power to inspire change that will give all people the right to determine the course of their own destiny.

India is worse witness of poor performance in Land Reforms. Many laws and policies like Tenancy Act, Land Ceiling Act and Tribal Self Rule, which were passed long back were not yet implemented. On the other many anti-poor laws like Central Forest Conservation Act, Land Acquisition Act, Mines & Minerals Act and Special Economic Zone Act were implemented with full enthusiasm. All these key concerns need to be acted upon urgently for reasons of efficiency as well as equity. Ignoring just aspirations of the masses in rural India for inclusive development will only entail huge economic and political costs. The process of rapid industrialization has resulted in acquisition of land on a large scale and displacement of people. Industrialization is important for development but it needs not be and cannot be supported at the expense of agriculture and the basic rights of the people for land and livelihood. Thus, it is very important that every State clearly demarcates land to be used for different purposes. Revitalization of Land Reforms Council at the Centre and Land Policy Boards for every State is an urgent need to move toward clear land use policy. In this juncture of time it is relevant to call for a National Campaign for claiming dignity and rights of tribal community. The realization of critical mass would be an essential tool for securing and institutionalizing their due constitutional rights.

On October 2nd, 2007, twenty-five thousand people representing communities from all over India gathered in Gwalior to begin what proved to be the largest non-violent movement for land reform in the country's history. Its commencement marked the United Nations' International Day of Non-Violence and the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. To witness communities united in a display of non-violent civil disobedience evoked memories of the Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi that inspired civil rights movements throughout the world. Support came from all over, with 250 Satyagrahis (foot marchers) from international organizations showing their solidarity with each step that they took. More than 100 members of parliament supported Janadesh, including large number of representatives of social organizations all across India.

On October 29th, 2007 after negotiations with Ekta Parishad, the government of India announced that a National Land Reforms Council with 50% of the new committee's members coming from social and civil society organizations involved in the land rights movement. The success of this historical display of non-violent action.

In the absence of concrete following up action from side of the Government, Ekta Parishad is planning to give an ultimatum to the Government of India. In this ultimatum we are asking the Government to implement what they have promised and also bring about a radical shift in various policies including land, forest and water, to address the problem of poverty, migration and violence. Ekta Parishad will give three years time to the government to sit around the table for negotiation, reformulation of policies and implementation of the same. Ekta Parishad also offering its services to the government in this process. This is now up to the government to accept or reject this proposal. In case of rejection or indifference to the proposal the only option available for us is to organize another non-violent direct action called **Jan Satyagraha 2012 (People's Call for Truth 2012)**. Ekta Parishad is willing to dialogue with the State but at the same time we are also ready for our next **non-violent action with 100,000 people are to walk to Delhi**.

In order to give an international perspective to Jan Satyagraha 2012, we are constituting an International Working Group. We do believe, when we are struggling against common opponents in our country and continent, we need to build the bridges between and among movements for agrarian rights and dignity. Ekta Parishad along with 5,000 social organizations from India, would like to widen the space for possible Global Action parallel to Jan Satyagraha 2012. **We are writing this letter to you with the request to accept our invitation to join the International Working Group in order to represent your campaign and country.** We need your help in informing the people and the government of your country about the Global Campaign and Jan Satyagraha 2012 and create public opinion in support of this action. We are also organize parallel programme ti highlight the issues of your country and at the same time enlist a Global Action for our action in India. With your help we would like to form a Jan Satyagraha Action Group in your country. We will be sending you information on regular basis that can be circulated among the people who are interested to know more about the developments here in India. We hope that you accept this invitation and send us a positive response as early as possible. Soon, we are planning to organize a meeting of Working Committee Members for this Global Action—Jan Satyagraha 2012, so that we should draw a broad framework for Global Action.

We are constantly in dialogue with other like minded campaigns all across the globe, with the hope to build collective strength for Global Action—Jan Satyagraha 2012.

Hoping to receive a positive response from you in support for a larger cause.

Very warm regards.

RAJAGOPAL P V
President — Ekta Parishad

RAMESH SHARMA
Campaign Coordinator—Jan Satyagraha 2012

Religion, World Order, and Peace

The following essay presents four outstanding examples of Buddhist leaders who have dedicated their lives to addressing the issues highlighted in "Religion, World Order, and Peace," the document prepared for the U.N. Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. The authors of the document rightly point out that from a historical perspective the world's religions have served to constitute a sense of social solidarity but they also have contributed to enmity and violent conflict. Doctrinally, the world religions uphold ideals of peace and non-violence, but historically they have been instrumental causes of intolerance and discrimination. In the face of the complicated connection between religion and conflict, the authors call on religious and spiritual leaders to commit to mitigating violence and transforming it into constructive behavior in ways that involve rethinking the formation of the religious life, reexamining sacred symbols, and reallocating resources. While not ignoring contemporary instances of Buddhist intolerance and even violence, are there exemplary Buddhists who are responding in positive and creative ways to the challenge posed by the U.N. document? To answer this question, I shall look at four different examples: Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese monk credited with coining the phrase, "socially engaged Buddhism;" Sulak Sivaraksa, the Thai social activist and co-founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists; A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder of the Sar-

vodaya Shramadana movement, the largest Buddhist NGO in Sri Lanka; and Dharma Master Cheng Yen, the Taiwanese nun who established the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, the largest charity organization in Taiwan with centers in thirty countries.

Although Thich Nhat Hanh's current fame in the Americas and Europe is as a Zen meditation teacher who leads spiritual retreats, his vocation as monk and peace activist began in Vietnam during the waning days of French colonialism, World War II, and the Vietnam War. Receiving full monastic ordination in 1949, he founded the An Quang Institute of Buddhist Studies in Saigon in 1950, and Van Hanh Buddhist University and the School of Youth for Social Service in the mid-1960s. The latter became one of the primary centers of socially engaged Buddhist activism dedicated to healing the violence of the Vietnam War on the streets of Saigon. In 1966, Nhat Hahn presented a five-point peace proposal to Washington that included a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawal, and in 1969 he headed the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation during the Paris Peace talks. After the end of the Vietnam War, he helped organize rescue missions for Vietnamese refugees trying to escape from political oppression.

In 1965, Nhat Hanh founded the Order of Interbeing (Tiep Hien) headquartered at the Plum Village Monastery in the south of France with other centers in Europe and North America based

on the fundamental principle that peace in the creation of human communities requires not merely political, economic, and social change but inner transformation. A prolific writer and widely sought-after speaker, Nhat Hanh continues his activities as a peace advocate including peace marches at MacArthur Park, Los Angeles, in 2005 and 2007. He teaches the essential relationship between contemplation and action; that the realization of one's deepest, spiritual self and active involvement on behalf of the well-being of others are interdependent; and that the cultural transformation necessary for the development of just, harmonious communities goes hand in hand with the practice of mindful awareness.

After he returned to Thailand in 1961 having completed university and law degrees in Wales and England, Sulak Sivaraksa became a major force in developing intellectual concern over the social, economic, and political problems facing Thailand and creating a series of NGOs to address them. They have included the Coordinating Group for Religion and Society (CGRS), an ecumenical Buddhist and Christian human rights organization; the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development (TICD) that has sought to encourage Buddhist student associations to participate in social service and social change programs, to act as a bridge between rural and urban sectors of society, and to promote educational projects for children in slum areas; and the Santi (Peace), Pracha (Democratic)

Dhamma Institute (SPDI). The SPDI's projects include the Thai Forum Program that provides information to the mass media on alternative approaches to peace and justice; the Thai-Indo-chinese Dialogue Project that facilitates dialogue among Thai, Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese; and Sekiyadhamma, an organization that assists and supports the work of monks dedicated to developing a constructive Buddhist challenge to the rapid destruction of the natural environment and the dissolution of religious and cultural values.

S. Sivaraksa articulates his philosophy of social and political activism in terms of a creative reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist teachings, for example, he extends the moral precept not to take the life of a sentient being to the use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides that deplete the soil of rich microorganisms, the destruction of forests that contributes to the loss of biodiversity, and the contamination caused by the dumping of nuclear and chemical waste. He directs the moral precept against lying toward a critique of advertising that promotes excessive consumption and prurient sensationalism in news reporting; and for S. Sivaraksa the Buddhist principle of non-attachment becomes an attack on consumerism, corporate greed and unjust economic systems that exacerbate the gap between the rich and the poor, and the commoditization of culture.

One of the most active groups working for peace in Sri Lanka has been the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement (Awakening of All Through the Gift of Labor). It was founded by A.T. Ariyaratne in 1958 as a rural self-help program that over the years

has organized Shramadana development programs in over eight thousand villages. The programs are based on the basic Buddhist principles of sharing (*dana*), constructive activity (*arthacharya*), and equality (*samanathamatha*) and seek to promote individual and community material and spiritual harmony and well-being. Sarvodaya has grown into the largest welfare organization in the island with 1,500 full-time employees and approximately 200,000 volunteers. It cares for over 1,000 orphaned and destitute children and sponsors 4,335 preschools that serve over 98,000 children. With the escalation of the conflict between the Sinhalese dominated government and the Tamil minority in 1983, Ariyaratne increasingly turned his efforts toward peace building. These activities included setting up the first camps for Tamil refugees, organizing peace conferences, leading peace marches, organizing relief programs in conflict areas, and initiating a fund to aid the people of the Northern Province affected by displacement.

Inspired by both Buddhist teachings and Gandhian ideals, Ariyaratne's vision aims at a reform of the values and structures that create conflict. With that goal in mind he directs a Buddhist critique at political and economic structures in Sri Lanka with the goal of challenging partisan party politics and consumerism. Currently, he contends, Sri Lanka party politics are dominated by: *chanda* (alienation based on caste, linguistic, racial, and communal divisions used by political parties to promote self-interest rather than the well-being of all); *dvesha* (political propaganda

based on rumor and falsehood that promotes violent confrontation); and *bhaya* (a spirit of fear and mutual suspicion promoted by a handful of politically powerful people for their own personal benefit). Likewise, the economy fails to serve the needs of all classes but, rather, promotes the material well-being of a small minority and is rife with corruption. Buddhist economics, by contrast, seeks increased efficiency in production (*uttarasampada*), protection of natural resources and the environment (*arakkasampada*), a cooperative rather than competitive social ethos (*kalayamittata*), and a wholesome, sustainable lifestyle (*samajivakata*) for all. Ariyaratne appeals primarily to Buddhist principles, although he reinterprets them in inclusive, ecumenical terms that challenge social and political barriers and highlight the common spiritual values shared by temple, kovil, mosque, and church.

In 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, a Taiwanese nun, founded the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. It has become one of the largest non-profit philanthropic organizations in the world with a staff of over five hundred and 30,000 trained volunteers with headquarters in Taiwan and branches in over thirty countries. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation opened a California branch in 1989 and currently has over 100,000 members. Specializing in poverty alleviation, medical care, vocational training, environmental protection, and disaster relief, the Foundation built its first hospital in eastern Taiwan in 1986. Since then, it has opened five more hospitals, a college of medicine (1994) that has become Tzu Chi University,

and in 1989 founded Taiwan's first private nursing college.

The Foundation has supported numerous disaster relief projects around the world including responding to the devastation caused by the 1996 typhoon and 1999 earthquake in Taiwan, and sending 3,000 volunteers to Banda Aceh and 1,000 to Sri Lanka in the wake of the 2004 Tsunami. Given Dharma Master Cheng Yen's strong service orientation, it is not surprising that she often appeals to the Buddhist principles of love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, and the Bodhisattva idea symbolized by Guanyin. In response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti the Foundation organized a relief effort that included 400,000 packs of instant rice, 30 tons of cornmeal, 50,000 blankets, 10,000 boxes of bottled water, 150,000 anti-inflammatories,

5,000 body bags, and other canned food and medical supplies. The effort was promoted under such banners as "Walking the Path of Compassion," and "Gathering the Love of All to Care for Quake Survivors in Haiti."

No generalization adequately characterizes the historical and contemporary record of the world's religions regarding the perennial, if not intractable, challenges of world peace, institutional violence, economic injustice, and systemic intolerance. For example, although the principle of non-violence (ahimsa) figures prominently in Buddhist ethics, violence has been part of the Buddhist historical record, and Buddhist communities today are not exempt for intolerance and internal conflict. However, as illustrated by the international prominence of H.H. Dalai Lama,

the life and work of Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa, A. T. Ariyaratne, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, and many others, it is beyond dispute that Buddhist leaders throughout the world are seriously engaged in "creating a culture of peace and justice for the entire human community" that address political conflict, economic injustice, civil rights, and human welfare through the creation of new institutional structures, reinterpreting Buddhist teachings, and reallocating material resources to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.

Donald K. Swearer

Distinguished Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies and Director, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School.

Robert Aitken Roshi — A Personal & Biographical Reflection

Robert Baker Aitken — Dairyu Chotan/Great Dragon (of the Clear Pool — died on August 5 in Honolulu at the age of 93. He was the "dean" of Western Zen teachers, a great light of dharma. Aitken Roshi was a prophetic and inconvenient voice right to the end. I have a picture of him from a year or two back, smiling impishly, holding up a hand-lettered sign that reads: "The System Stinks."

Over the last twenty years I was privileged to collaborate with Aitken Roshi at Buddhist Peace Fellowship, to study with



him at the Honolulu Diamond Sangha, and to help with editorial tasks on one of his books. As thousands of readers found, his books are treasures — deep in dharma, crisp and vivid in voice, and ringing with the sound of justice.

Robert Aitken spent childhood years in Honolulu, not far from the Palolo Zendo he built later in life. When I practiced with him at Palolo in 1996, he took me for a walk through his old neighborhood, pointing out the parks and houses, strolling along the beach at Waikiki and

through the grand old parlors of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. He loved the air and sea. The sounds of birds and geckos punctuated his lectures, calling him to attention.

During World War II, as a construction worker on Guam, young Robert Aitken was interned by invading Japanese troops and sent to a camp in Kobe, Japan for the rest of the war. A sympathetic guard gave him a copy of R.H. Blyth's *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics* which he read over and over. In 1944, by chance, Aitken and Blyth, who had also been interned in Japan, were transferred to the same camp. They became close friends, and Aitken determined he would study Zen with a true master on his release.

He returned to Hawaii and earned a bachelor's degree in literature and a master's degree in Japanese language. A thesis on the great Zen poet Bassho became his first book, *A Zen Wave*. In the late 1940s he began Zen studies in Los Angeles with the pioneering teacher Nyogen Senzaki. He went to Japan in the early 50s to practice with Nakagawa Soen Roshi, one of the 20th century's most original Rinzai monks, who invited him to lead a sitting group in 1959, placing Robert Aitken among the very first western Buddhist teachers.

From 1962 on, Aitken organized *sesshins* for Yasutani Roshi, whose Sanbo Kyodan (Three Treasures) school merged the *shikantaza* emphasis of Soto with rigorous koan work of the Rinzai school. Studying with

Yasutani, and with his successor Yamada Koun Roshi, Robert Aitken was authorized to teach independently, and became known as Aitken Roshi. The Diamond Sangha arose from his travels and teachings. It now has more than twenty affiliates around the world, and a cadre of accomplished and transmitted dharma heirs.

Aitken Roshi, his wife Anne, and Nelson Foster founded the Buddhist Peace Fellowship on the back porch of the Maui Zendo in 1978. The idea was to further the interdependent practice of awakening and social justice. The spark for BPF was struck from Roshi's in depth study of 19th and 20th century anarchism, and his long experience as an anti-war and anti-military activist. BPF continues to this day with the same mission. In a later book, *Encouraging Words*, Aitken Roshi wrote that "monastery walls have broken down and the old teaching and practice of wisdom, love and responsibility are freed for the widest applications in the domain of social affairs."

I was drawn to Aitken Roshi's books in the 1980s, first reading his classic *Taking the Path of Zen* (1982), a primer on Zen practice. I have a copy of *The Mind of Clover* (1984) signed at a reading at Black Oak Books in early 1985. In my reckoning this is still the best book around on practical Buddhist ethics. But among his thirteen published books (with more to come, I hope), I would also point out *The Gateless Barrier* — Roshi's translation of the *Mumonkan* koan collection

— and *The Practice of Perfection*, his commentary on the *paramitas* or Mahayana "perfections."

Aitken Roshi was a disciplined writer. That was an essential part of his daily practice, writing for several hours each morning, trying to avoid interruptions and distractions. Several times I found him reading aloud to himself, polishing the language and voice until it sounded right to his ears. You can hear that distinct voice in every page he wrote.

There is an image near the end of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the pinnacle of early Chinese Hua-Yen Buddhism, that Aitken Roshi often cited. Similar to the interdependent reality of Indra's Net, he delighted in the idea of Maitreya's tower, extending into and throughout space, encompassing an infinite number of towers, one as brilliant and astonishing as the next. And somehow these towers co-exist in space without conflict or contradiction. I think this dazzling vision is how Roshi saw the world. It is also how we can see his mind and work.

Aitken Roshi never found an inch of separation between his vision of justice and the Zen teachings of complete interdependence. The vast universe, with all its joys and sorrows was his true dwelling place. It still is. Robert Aitken Roshi, *presente!*

Hozan Alan Senauke

Sukprida Banomyong: Defender of his Father's Democratic Legacy

Writer Sukprida Banomyong, well-known son of the late senior statesman Pridi Banomyong and the late Thanpooying Poonsuk Banomyong, spent much of the latter part of his life defending and reviving the legacy of his father and the 1932 revolt.

Sukprida passed away last Friday, aged 75, after succumbing to cancer and septicaemia.

Although his father's legacy is more or less solid today, the tarnishing and subsequent revival of the reputation of Pridi Banomyong tells us a lot about how history is often written and rewritten.

Pridi, who led the civilian wing of the 1932 revolt which ended absolute monarchy, was exiled to China and died in France. Sukprida, as a third child, grew up in exile with his parents.

It was not until two decades ago that Pridi's posthumous reputation was restored. As a son of Pridi, Sukprida was unwavering in his desire to play a significant part—through his writings and public speaking—in salvaging the reputation of his father who, for decades, had been accused of being a communist and of being behind the death of King Ananda.

Sukprida's untimely departure means he will never finish a book in progress on the social and political context of the June 24, 1932 revolt.

"It's unfortunate that the book, scheduled to be finished on June 24 next year, will not materialise," said Sinsawad



Yodbangtoey, manager of the Pridi Banomyong Institute who worked with Sukprida.

Sinsawad said Sukprida was among those who have tried to explain and clarify the legacy of the 1932 revolt, as well as the motivation and intentions of Pridi.

Vipar Daomanee, a lecturer in social innovation at Thammasat University, fondly recalled Sukprida as an unassuming gentleman who defended the legacy of the 1932 revolt and that of his father to the very end.

Vipar recalled a recent spat between Sukprida and a Thammasat historian, expressing sadness that Sukprida would not be able to pen his rebuttal in full.

"[Sukprida] was so angry. He was writing the rebuttal," said Vipar, of the event which transpired in May this year. "Never was he elitist, despite the fact that he was the son of a national leader. He would prostrate to me every time he saw me, sometimes even before I did."

Vipar said Sukprida was definitely "not a royalist" and like the rest of the family, disliked formality and ritual. Sukprida's body has been

donated to Thammasat Rangsit Hospital and his funeral rite at Wat Phra Si Mahathat Bang Khaen was a modest affair.

On the few occasions this writer met Sukprida—as a son of one of Sukprida's friends and as someone distantly related on both our maternal sides through the Suwannasala clan—Sukprida was always gentle, kind and unassuming.

But like many public figures caught in the current political divide, Sukprida couldn't escape the ire of the yellow-shirt People's Alliance for Democracy.

Indeed, even with the passing of Sukprida, generations of scholars, activists and intellectuals will continue to debate about 1932 and Pridi's role in society, especially now that many royalists feel insecure and paranoid about the future of their institution.

In a way, Sukprida's life was overshadowed by his famous father's larger-than-life stature and the attempt to restore Pridi's honour. Now he may perhaps rest in peace and leave the debates and disputes to the rest of us—and for history to continue to be rewritten.

Pravit Rojanaphruk
The Nation,
November 4, 2010

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2010/11/04/opinion/Sukprida-Banomyong-defender-of-his-father-s-democr-30141501.html>

In Memoriam: “Chao Khun Sangharaja” Bunleun Mansap (2 April 1929 – 2 December 2010)

In the past Thais respectfully called a Catholic bishop “Chao Khun Sangharaja”. To me this appellation is better than the official title of “Mukhanayok Missung”. Therefore, Bishop Pallegoix during the reign of King Rama IV was known as “Chao Khun Sangharaja Yuang” based on his first name. And when King Rama IV was still in the monkhood during the Third Reign the people often called him “Thun Kramom Phra” or “monk prince”.

For this reason I called Bishop Bunleun “Chao Khun”. (Mon Seigneur) Likewise, he would teasingly call me “Chao Khun” (my lord). He was always humble and unattached to his official title. In fact, before he became bishop I had respectfully called him “Father”. I continued to do so thereafter.

The first time I publicly referred to Bishop Bunleun as “Chao Khun Sangharaja” was in *Matichon* daily newspaper. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj did not agree with my view and wrote an article in *Siam Rath* newspaper in reply. Soon we were replying to one another in kind through newspaper articles.

I first met Father Bunleun Mansap in Kyoto in 1971 during a 3-week international conference organized by the Jesuits. The conference was called “Education for Social Action Workshop”. Its primary objec-



tive was to find ways to make education a responsible vehicle for social change. The delegation of each country was made up of roughly 15 members. I was one of the persons invited to attend the conference. The Thai delegates chose Ajarn Samarn Saeng-mali as the chair. Subsequently, he became permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education.

Father Bunleun was invited to deliver a keynote address on “Credit Union” to the conference participants. I had no previous knowledge of this topic before. When I listened to the speech I grew to admire the credit union idea. We soon had a chance to talk to one another. It did not take long before we came to understand and trust one another. I wanted Buddhist ecclesiastical officials to know about the credit union so that they could make good use of it. Father Bunleun facilitated my aim by providing

me with the necessary knowledge.

At the time I was helping Phra Dhammacetiya of Wat Thongnopakun to organize workshops for ecclesiastical officials in various provinces. I informed him that there was a Catholic priest who was knowledgeable about the credit union, which might be useful for monks to help lay people to properly manage their livelihood. Father Bunleun and his credit union team were thus invited to lecture Buddhist ecclesiastical officials in various provinces. I was then invited by Father Bunleun and his team to travel to Hong Kong and Africa to expand my knowledge on credit union.

On one occasion, Phra Dhammacetiya invited Father Bunleun and me to travel to Phichit province to lecture local ecclesiastical officials. Ajarn Puey Ungphakorn was invited as a guest lecturer on that day too. When we finished our duty at the temple, the three of us along with a few others went to have dinner at a small restaurant near the train station. Our conversation that evening was casual and friendly. Later that evening, Father Bunleun also went to send Ajarn Puey and I to the train bound for Bangkok. It was a memorable moment for me.

Furthermore, the credit union movement managed to organize trips for several of our

ecclesiastical officials to go abroad and observe developmental work, especially in Sri Lanka and South Korea. This initiative enabled Thai monks to gain invaluable experiences. Sri Lankan and South Korean monks were at the forefront of community development projects, which were not limited to the establishment of credit unions. For instance, Luang Por Nan Suddhasilo from Surin province came back with knowledge of how to launch rice and buffalo banks as well as of collective farming. He eventually gained international recognition for his developmental work. His rice bank produced pesticide-free rice which was then directly sent to Christian organizations in Switzerland for international sales. Many students and academics, local and foreign, also came to study Luang Por's work.

Father Bunleun served as a vital link for Buddhists and Christians to cooperate not only in developmental and social work but also in political initiatives. After the 14 October 1973 political turmoil, the country became more democratized than in previous periods. The military was forced to diminish its role as a state within a state. At the same time, many of its neighbors, notably Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam became full-fledged Communist states. This caused the country's elites to increasingly depend on the power and support of the military and right-wing political movements. The Left in the country also expanded greatly. The crisis eventually reached its apogee in October 1976.

Many of us who were peo-

ple of faith (Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian) reached the conclusion that religious teachings should be used to awaken the moral conscience of Thai society. In particular, violent measures should give way to non-violence. We set up the Group of Religion for Society. It attracted the interest of many young people. Many of them played influential roles in the student organizations of their universities. Father Bunleun, Koson Srisang (representing Protestantism) and I served as the main pillars of the Group. During October '76 I was abroad. The Group thus asked Koson to act as president. However, he faced a lot of threats and therefore resigned from the Group. Like me, he also had to travel abroad. Father Bunleun thus accepted to serve as president of the Group. It seemed that the Group was the only actor that gained a modicum of respect and recognition from almost all sides. The far right in the government however tried to crush it.

Father Bunleun capably acted as the Group's president and skillfully used mindfulness, wisdom, compassion and loving-kindness to sustain and facilitate its activities. He found international funding for the Group. He gave valuable advice and moral support to the young members of the Group. Subsequently, we got important support from an English friend (Nicholas Bennett) as well as several Thais such as Gothom Arya and Srisawang Puawongpat. Paisal Wongworawisit later ordained and known as Phra Paisal Visalo was also a member of the Group.

Every time I faced the lese majeste charge Father Bunleun

always gave me moral support and did everything he could to help me such as by informing international Catholic organizations to petition the Thai government on my behalf. Every time I visited him at his office on Silom road, we would have a lot of time to speak to one another.

I wrote this obituary in great haste when I learned that Father Bunleun had passed away. It had to be published and distributed at his funeral in Ubonratchathani province. He was the bishop of Ubonratchathani.

Given the time limitation, I could not write as much as I wanted. But ever since I first met him I considered Father Bunleun to be my *kalyanamitta*. We were from different religions but this made us respect one another even more. Father Bunleun never hesitated to help me or other Buddhists. When Thammasat University held a ceremony to celebrate my 60th birthday, I invited Father Bunleun to give the closing remark or final blessing—which he kindly did. And when his disciples organized a merit-making ceremony to mark his birthday, I was also a participant. Whenever I was in Ubonratchathani I tried to find the time to pay respect to him. On certain occasions he invited me to give talks to the local Catholic community. As a result, I had an opportunity to befriend several Catholic priests there.

I will forever remember his innumerable benefactions—not only to me but also to Thai Buddhists and Catholics. Father Bunleun did not only serve his God but also the rest of humanity with courage, humility, and good humor.

S. Sivaraksa

Claude Levenson

Today I have to inform you that our great and smart fighter for Tibet, Madame Claude Levenson just passed away yesterday night, on December 12, 10h 30 pm. Jean Claude Buhner, her husband, told me that she kept in her hands a small statue of Buddha that His Holiness offered her.

Marcelle Roux

December 3, 2010

Dear Sulak

It has been a great pleasure to receive your letter of last July 8th, with the good news. I hope that everything is going well for you and what you keep on with your wonderful works.

I have been in Latin America quite often and lately in China. The next 3 months, I would be in Ecuador.

Good wishes and very best regards.

François Houtart
Centre Tricontinental
Av. Ste Gertrude 5
B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Belgique

September 9, 2010

Dear Sulak,

Thanks for sharing the wonderful news! A decade-long period of suffering from nasty accusations has come to an end. The truth cannot be suppressed forever. Will those who filed the case against you have to provide some compensation?

Anyhow, congratulations for your restored legal freedom! Actually, I never felt that you have been un-free! I have known you only as a free man in mind and thought! The way in which you have practised your being-free during the hard years of struggle was convincing, finally also for those who had questioned your loyalty and your authenticity.

I feel that you should celebrate this great event as an individual as well as national victory of truth and law in Siam. If Bangkok would not be so far away, I would join the party with happiness and renewed friendship!

Yours with greetings of justice, peace and love,

Inge and Wolfgang Schmidt
Germany

P.S. Thank you for the *Seeds of Peace*, Sept-Dec 2010. I have read almost all articles and notes. I was wondering, whether I have met Luang Por Tian? However, I am sure, that I never met Sergio Regazzoni. With great interest I read J.v. Uexkull's article, although I missed mentioning the dramatic nuclear threat while talking about a strategy to save our planet. From Hans von Willenswaard's note I learned that you are planning to organize an international think tank in 2011 in Europe?

November 4, 2010

Dear Sulak,

This is very good news.

I hope you are well. I think of you often – and quote you!

Yours,

John Ralston Saul
12 Admiral Road,
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2L5, Canada

November 4, 2010

Dear Sulak,

I was so glad to receive your note.

Please accept my felicitations and expression of relief that you are free of worry of prosecution.

I hope that your health is strong and that you will continue to raise issues of diversity and freedom in your country and beyond.

With warm greeting from your Australian friend.

Fond wishes,

Michael D. Kirby
Level 7, 195 Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000, Australia
Email: mail@michaelkirby.com.au

P.S. Please note my new address since my retirement from the High Court of Australia.

October 1, 2010

Dear Sulak,

I finished your autobiography last week. I was most impressed with your courage, social entrepreneurship, and simple, clear writing. I also heard your excellent interview by Amy Goodman of Democracy Now 2 weeks ago. I trust your trip to Germany went well.

I read your memorial piece on your website about our dear friend George Willoughby. You have mistakenly posted the photo of Chuck Fager instead of George Willoughby. George would laugh about this. Chuck himself is a something of a gadfly with many similarities to you and George.

I have not been to Bangkok in many years. Hope your family is doing well.

Warmly,
Michael Beer
Director
Nonviolence International, USA
+1 202 244 0951

September 1, 2010

Dear Sulak,

I was very pleased to hear from our friend Lokamitra that you had not only enjoyed the two books I sent but had also reviewed them. I have sent Lokamitra two more books of mine and have asked him to give them to you next time the two of you meet. They are rather different from the first two, but I hope you will enjoy them nonetheless, or will at least find them interesting.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Sangharakshita
Birmingham, UK

August 31, 2010

Dear Sulak

I wanted to personally thank you for allowing us to use your video on Big Picture TV. Big Picture is now attracting a wider and more diverse audience than ever, and it's important to us that you share in our success.

Our aim is to use our platform and extensive networks to raise the profile of your work, particularly with business and educational audiences where your inspiration can have a unique impact.

Royalty payments for Big Picture TV speakers

In acknowledgement of your consent to streaming and downloading of your videos on Big Picture TV, we have developed a new royalty structure. From now on every speaker whose content is downloaded by paying subscribers or licensing partners will be paid a royalty.

We trust you are still happy for us to stream and promote your videos and link to them via twitter, facebook, youtube and other distribution methods. *Please confirm which of these is your correct or preferred email contact so that we can provide further information on the new royalty structure.*

Big Picture Speaker Bureau

As a speaker on Big Picture TV you will now have access to paid speaking engagements and educational sessions through our new in-house bureau team, headed by Lynda Thain (lynda@bigpicture.tv). Lynda will follow-up with you in the near future.

We have booked a number of Big Picture speakers for paid engagements. There is no upfront charge or exclusive arrangement for this. However when we book paid engagements we do deduct a pre-agreed booking commission from the speaker fee. Speaker fees can be used as income or as a donation to support an organisation or chosen charity.

You may of course notify us at any time if you decide that you no longer wish Big Picture to promote you for speaking engagements. *If you DO NOT wish us to identify you as being available for paid speaking or educational engagements, then please notify us by return email.*

Thanks again for your support. We look forward to being in closer touch.

All the best,

Tyler Moorehead

Executive Director

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Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason, and Lese-Majeste by David Streckfuss Defamation VS Democracy A brilliant legal history and wideranging diagnosis of current disconten

This big, brave and important book argues that defamation laws are the cornerstone of Thailand's authoritarian political culture. They have strangled the media, wrecked public debate, undermined artistic and intellectual work, and ensured impunity for a long litany of state crimes. They underpin an authoritarian control of thought and expression that is extraordinary in a country that likes to think of itself as a democracy.

Defamation is a strange crime. It is committed when spoken or written words damage

the reputation of a person or institution in the eyes of the world. But how is guilt established? Theoretically, some kind of survey would be needed to show that people's views had been changed by the words under scrutiny. In practice, courts either focus on the malicious intent of the author of the words, or use their own Olympian judgement about the words' impact. In the pure form of the law, the truth of the words is not at issue, only their impact. Indeed, the closer the offending words are to the truth, the greater

the crime. Defamation is a slippery area of law that can easily be used to silence criticism and debate.

Thailand's first edict on defamation was introduced in 1900. The legal code of 1908 elaborated this into specific clauses on defamation of individuals, the government (sedition), and the monarchy (lese-majesty). These laws were drafted by foreign advisers and in line with international practice of the era. The trend since then in democratic countries has been to weaken laws on defamation,

especially in reference to public figures and institutions, in order to make room for the debate and criticism that nourish a democratic society. For a half-century, Thailand followed that same trend. Penalties were reduced. Cases were few. Legal authorities resisted attempts by governments to make the law fiercer.

But from 1958 that trend has gone into reverse. The laws became broader, penalties harsher, odds on conviction higher. Most strikingly, the volume of litigation gradually increased and then rocketed in the last few years. The number of cases of personal defamation brought to court was 333 a year in 1961 to 1973, rising to 680 in the early 1990s, 1,160 from 1998 to 2003, and a staggering 2,200 per year between 2004 and 2008. The number of lese-majesty cases brought to court was one a year in 1949 to 1956, rising to 10 a year from 1977 to 1992, and booming to 111 a year since 2005. After tracing this history, David Streckfuss argues that the use of defamation laws in Thailand is out of line with the rest of the world, and with the feelings of the society. Dangerously so. How has this come about? Streckfuss develops two arguments. First, a frame of thinking rooted in Theravada Buddhism and unchanged by the challenges of modernity is very fertile ground for defamation. Buddhist ethics place a lot of emphasis on intent, which is key to judging defamation. The Buddhist concept of merit arrays everyone in a moral hierarchy where the meritorious at the top are uniquely able to perceive truth-beyond-truth, and the "hot-hearted" demons at the bottom are characteristically prone to

malice. By perceiving the malice underlying the words of the demons, the meritorious can prevent the spread of ideas they deem damaging to society.

Second, the authoritarian regimes that have appeared regularly since 1958 have strengthened defamation laws, in order to stifle criticism, debate and independent thinking. The 1958 coup government enlarged the lese-majesty law to cover "any matter infringing on His Majesty the King". The 1976 coup government increased the maximum penalty from seven to 15 years. The 1991 coup government raised the penalties for personal defamation so steeply that defamation charges became a useful tool for politicians, officials and institutions to intimidate critics into silence. The 2006 coup government expanded defamation laws into cyberspace with staggering penalties.

Streckfuss argues that coup governments, though often short-lived, have contrived a "defamation regime", which is a permanent form of oppression. Each coup regime claims there is a crisis caused by corruption and threats to the monarchy, requiring a suspension of democracy and the introduction of harsher legislation. The judiciary has been complicit in legitimating the coups and enforcing the coup-makers' laws. The scope of sedition or defamation of the state has progressively widened. The 1952 anti-communist act criminalised words and actions which threatened the trinity of Nation, Religion and King. The 1969 retread of the law enlarged this to include "any act which destroys the traditions and customs of the Thai race". Under this vague rubric, a huge range

of ideas and actions can be imagined as threats to "national security" or "Thai culture" or "national unity". Over the last 25 years, conservative forces have contrived an idea of "Thainess" as a bundle of values that needs to be protected from all kinds of threat.

In the last section of the book, Streckfuss draws out the implications for Thailand's public life and political health. He relates a long interview with the officer responsible for press censorship from 1976 to 1991. This officer cheerfully relates how he censored stories either at the behest of "big people" or because the stories undermined an imagined view of a paternal government earnestly looking after the interests of the citizenry. Whether the reportage in these stories was true or false was not material to his work. Censorship of cinema and television has followed a similar principle of censoring words and scenes that affront an imagined picture of Thai society and Thai values. The history appearing in school textbooks and popular versions on cinema and television continues to peddle stories which express these values, but have long been shown up as fiction by academic research. From time to time, desperate attempts are made to persuade foreigners to submit to the same kind of censorship (from the famous case of the Longman dictionary to the recent outcry against CNN and BBC).

Streckfuss argues that the defamation regime induces "defamation thinking". In its simplest form, journalists and editors self-censor their output, producing newspapers that seem designed to obscure the news rather than reveal it. More per-

niciously, the defamation regime protects the state's acts of cruelty (1976, 1992, Tak Bai, May 2010, etc.) from any proper investigation and accounting. The public sphere becomes "shrunken, enfeebled, irrelevant". The word "truth" takes on a whole new meaning. As in defamation litigation, truth is not concerned with whether words are true, but about what impact they have on people or values deemed to be important. Again, as in defamation litigation, this judgement is not made by the people themselves but by the meritorious few who have a monopoly on superior insight. Streckfuss leads us through the wonderland of defamation case law with dollops of gallows humour.

David Streckfuss is a US academic who has lived in Thailand for over 20 years. He

wrote earlier on Sulak Sivaraksa's tangle with defamation charges. He notes that his 10-year delay in completing the book has given him an extraordinary ending — the spectacular defamation boom of the last five years. In the final few pages, he suspects that this boom has already gone too far. Punishments under the lese-majesty law are now steeper than they were under the absolute monarchy — indeed "higher than seen anywhere in the world since the 19th century". The total of 164 new cases filed last year roughly equals half the total number of cases from 1949 to 2005. The issue has become so convoluted that people accusing others of lese-majesty, or even just trying to explain the law, find themselves charged under the same law.

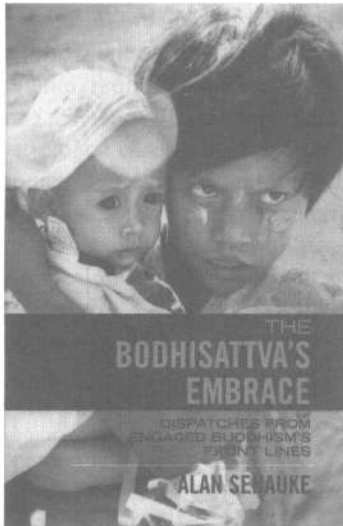
In the West, Streckfuss

notes, defamation laws were weakened a century ago precisely because they were found to be counterproductive — they provoked resentment against the people and institutions they were supposed to protect. Thai academics have recently raised this same concern here.

This book is a brilliant essay on Thailand's legal history based on very detailed research into legislation and case law. In addition, it offers a complex, thoughtful and wide-ranging diagnosis of current discontents. Its rich historical and international perspective should make Thailand's democrats and Democrats pause to wonder where the country is heading.

Chris Baker,
Bangkok Post,
8 November 2010

The Bodhisattva's Embrace: Dispatches from Engaged Buddhism's Front Lines



By Alan Senauke
Clear View Press, 2010, 226
pages, paperback

Sometimes a book emerges that is both deeply personal and vastly profound. I'm thinking of books like Sivaraksa's *Loyalty Demands Dissent*, Nhat Hanh's *Fragrant Palm Leaves*, and Aung San Suu Kyi's *Freedom From Fear*. These writings express a wisdom that can only be realized through investigating one's own vulnerabilities in relation to struggles with justice. This justice includes the liberation of communities and societies, as well as the personal liberation of the author, for they are both entwined. It is not easy to balance a personal narrative of experience with a resounding call for collective action. Yet, sometimes these works do arise.

Senauke's *The Bodhisattva's Embrace* is just such a book — a collection of eloquent essays that take the reader on a global journey of active dharma, while remaining grounded in praxis.

The reader is first introduced to dharmic teachings that support Senauke's engagement with the world. The title of the essay collection comes from Dogen's "Bodaisatta Shishobo," which is translated as "The Bodhisattva's Four Embracing Dharmas." Senauke explains that these four embracing dharmas are each

a method for connecting — a way to manifest the truth that we are not separate from each other. Because we

are truly not separate from others, these four Dharmas allow Bodhisattvas and sentient beings to become free from the poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. In embrace there is no distinction between self and other, between a Bodhisattva and an ordinary being.

These four Dharmas of Giving, Loving-Speech, Beneficial-Action, and Identity-Action are found throughout the collection of Senauke's essays. You can find this lived embrace in his experience with a witness delegation in Burma, just months after the Saffron Revolution took to the streets "in solidarity with a suffering nation." These Dharmas are present when Senauke is embracing Dalits in India, shipbreakers in Bangladesh, and inmates in Federal prison in the United States.

The Bodhisattva's Embrace covers a wide range of on-the-ground engaged Buddhism, through essays on various topics, each written from a perspective of direct experience and action. In fact, the expansiveness of the collection is quite impressive. Yet, Senauke presents each piece with a humble honesty, that addresses the systemic causes and conditions of suffering, while recognizing and challenging his own place in the interdependent web comprising systems of oppression.

What stands out for me is a trio of essays that examine and bear witness to privilege and

race. The essay "On Race and Buddhism" was my first introduction to Senauke, some years ago. It still resonates with me, inviting me to question my own practice[...].

Perhaps the most courageous of essays is "What did you learn in school?," which shares reflections from the 40th anniversary of the Columbia University strike. Although Senauke informs the reader that it might be too "in house" with references, the wisdom gained from investigating vulnerability is some of the most powerful I have read. It directly addresses the sexism and racism that was present in 1968, both from the perspective of social conscience, and the perspective of white social activists. Privileged racism and sexism does not just manifest from individuals seeking to uphold the status-quo — it also comes from activists seeking to change society in their own image without an awareness of and support for other ideas.

His essay "The Stickiness of Privilege" is another expression that questions privilege and place in social change. He is clear to state, though, that he "is not discounting my work and the efforts of so many of us. We cannot shake this privilege thing that sticks to us like sidewalk chewing gum on a rubber soled shoe. But I hope we can keep trying to use it wisely for the benefit of others."

Throughout *The Bodhisattva's Embrace*, Senauke con-

tinues to challenge concepts, while providing opportunities for working with the paradoxes present in engaging difference, embracing the other, and cultivating compassionate social change. In his essay on practicing with women in prison, he beautifully sums up this approach.

The practice of Engaged Buddhism entails insight and action exactly where self and social structures come together, moving freely between them as is appropriate. This effort - manifesting in areas of social change and protest, social service, environmental activism, hospice work, justice and democracy, civil rights and more - is beyond charity or well-intentioned service. It has the potential to transform self and others alike.

This quote encapsulates Senauke's work, one that has influenced socially engaged Buddhism locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. In many ways, *The Bodhisattva's Embrace* is a gift to the world, a very personal, compassionate, and comprehensive one, that can only continue as dana so long as it is continually given. If you or someone you know is at all interested in taking Buddhism out in to the world, *The Bodhisattva's Embrace* is both a primer for practice and a challenge to do so.

J. Tyson Casey

Restoring the Lao Language, the Ultimate Goal of DARA KANLAYA"

After the honorable SEA-Write Award Ceremony, "Dara

Kanlaya or Duang Champa"—new SEA-Write Award winner

from Laos, attended the warm and friendly reception called

“Aesthetic : Poetic Beloved”, set up by Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. She was welcomed cheerfully by Sulak Sivaraksa.

“I don’t feel excited with the SEA-Write Award nor the national artists. But I feel excited when a good person wins the SEA-Write Award, especially this year’s winner, “Dara Kanlaya”, a poet from Laos. Congratulations !!! Moreover, I feel it is more honorable for SEA-Write Award to have Dara Kanlaya as the winner than the other way around.”

In one part of Sulak’s speech, he mentioned that the key objective of this cultural reception is to congratulate 2 SEA-Write winners from Thailand and Laos, Sakariya Amataya and Dara Kanlaya. This is how borderless friendship is created. Meanwhile, truth, beauty and fraternity are enhanced as well.

In addition, this reception was participated by many famous and well-known poets, composers, artists, thinkers and scholars such as, Angkarn Kalayana-pong, Naowarat Pongpaibun, Suchart Sawassri, Sridaorueng, Prakai Patchaya, Duengwad Pimwana, Saksiri Meesomseub and Pibulsak Lakornpon.

Beside the enjoyment of poetry recital, the performance called *Sin Chai* which was performed by a youth group of Laos was admired by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. It is a classic poem which reflects that Thailand and Laos share the same roots.

On this special occasion,



the performance was held along both sides of Bangkok, one was at the reception in the Thonburi area while the other was at Bangkok Theater Fair in Suan Santi Chaiprakarn Park.

It is a good chance for Thais from various groups to be able to enjoy the beauty of Lao language and story of *Sin Chai*.

Auntie Dara Kallaya is committed to restore the Lao culture, especially the Lao language, like her younger sister “Duangduen Boonyavong” a former SEA-Write award winner.

Therefore, more important than receiving the SEA-Write Award, Dara Kanlaya wants to motivate young people to write more.

Auntie Dara replied with hope about how to encourage the

young people to write more. She said, *“This issue is important. Our country is used to be the land of various poems and literature but nowadays people are not interested much in writing. We do hope to come back to our roots that include various outstanding literary works especially poems. Young people should be encouraged to learn and compose new works as well.”*

The poem that caught the attention of the SEA-Write committee was called *“Bor Mi Tae Jao”* (บอมีแต่เจ้า / Not only you). The poem reflects society and encourages the people well.

“I want everyone to pay attention to any woman who is miserable and I want you to have new attitude towards the poor

people. Once you are rich and comfortable, sympathy for those who are in trouble is needed as well. Comparing the lives of 2 mothers, one is rich and lives in big city while the other one is poor and lives in a remote area, I want everyone to sympathize with other people as well. Meanwhile, when you are distressed I do not want you to think that your suffering is very serious but you should think that other

people might have more serious sufferings than you. So it will make you feel happy."

Duang Champa told us about the inspiration behind the writing of this verse in 2003-2004, a time of great social change in Laos.

"I wrote this verse from my own experience. I saw many things changing in society such as the big gap between the rich and the poor. The rich have

more chances while the poor are poorer and have less and less chance. I want to mention this point as I found that people care less for each other, and Buddhist culture is being ignored."

In the future Auntie wishes to write a novel. In the past, she had written one novel. But there are still many stories that she thinks she wants to write about.

Nation Weekend No.963

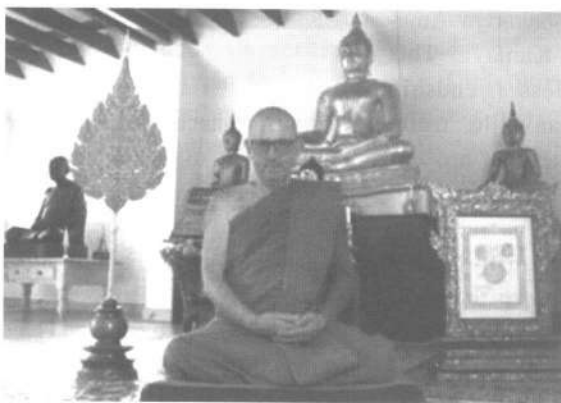


The 17th Sem Pringpuangkeo Lecture

Sponsored by Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation,
Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives,
and Thai Health Promotion Foundation

23rd January 2011

- The 17th Sem Pringpuangkeo Lecture: "Towards Understanding and Forgiving Inmates" by Chao Khun Phra Bhavanavitayt (Luang Por Khemadhammo), founder of Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy Organization in the UK. The primary objective of Angulimala is: "To make available facilities for the teaching and practice of Buddhism in Her Majesty's Prisons and other places of lawful detention or custody."
- Inmate art and photography exhibition or exhibition on organizations involved in providing advisory service to prisoners, 22-30 January 2011.
- Screening of films followed by talks to create better understanding of inmates; held every Saturday during the month of January.



*Luang Por
Khemadhammo*

Short biography

Luang Por Khemadhammo was born in England. In the early 1970s he became a novice monk in Bangkok and then became a disciple of Luang Por Chah Supaddo at Wat Nong Pah Pong. He later returned to England to spread the teachings of the Lord Buddha and eventually established the Forest Hermitage in Warwickshire. Aside from teaching the Dhamma at the Forest Hermitage he is also serving as

chaplain and spiritual director of the Buddhist Society at Warwick University.

He was appointed an OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Queen Elizabeth in 2003. In the following year, he was made a "Chao Khun" with the ecclesiastical title of "Phra Bhavanavitayt."

For further information please contact Semsikkha. Tel: 02 314 7385-6; Email: semsikkha_ram@yahoo.com

We Believe, Giving Dhamma Is the Noblest Type of Giving

Dhamma Drops Foundation, a Buddhism based non-profit organization, established in 2009 with the purpose of promoting mind oriented education in order to support social development.

Our goal is to achieve a generous society where everyone grows "wise" then lives and shares a life of inner peace.

The path we take is concentrating on activities with various groups of people conducted by monks and laypeople on a joint venture basis: for example, moral camps for teenagers in educational institutions including Juvenile Training Center of the Department of Justice and our 'Mental Optimum Oriented Magazine' under the name

"**Moom**", the free copy monthly Dhamma-based magazine targeting teenagers (approximately 17-35 years of age) distributed nationwide.

Support us today. Let more drops of Dhamma infiltrate into the minds of more people.

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www.dhammadrops.org
Account Name :
Dhamma Drops Foundation
Siam Commercial Bank,
Chiang Mai University Branch
Account No. : 667 2 690 643

Upcoming event in January!

On 30 / 1 /2011 the 'off-season offering' (ทอดผ้าป่า) purposing to raise seed fund for activities operation. Opening speech by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and a talk on "Buddhism and Justice in Society" from the perspectives of academic workers and social activists.

Global Buddhist Congregation 2011

From 26th - 5th December 2011

New Dehli, India

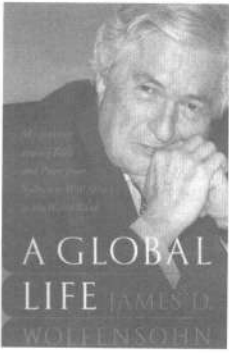
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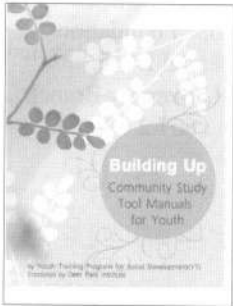
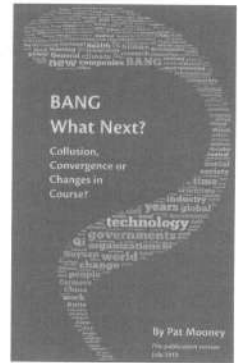
Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Sunday.
English books on Engaged Buddhism are available.



A Global Life: My Journey among Rich and Poor, from Sydney to Wall Street to the World Bank
 By James D. Wolfensohn
 Published by PublicAffairs
 First edition 2010

Bang - What Next?

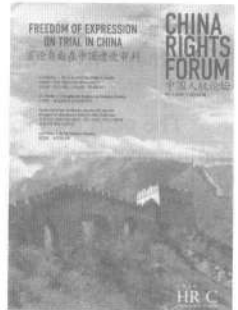
By Pat Mooney and ETC Group
 Editing and layout: Nicholas Hallstrom, What Next?
 Pre-publication version
 Printing: Jutaprint, Penang, Malaysia



Building Up: Community Study Tool Manuals for Youth
 By Youth Training Program for Social Development (YT)
 Second edition, September 2010
 Translated by Deer Park Institute
 Edited by Jessica Armour, Napawan Sittisak

China Rights Forum:

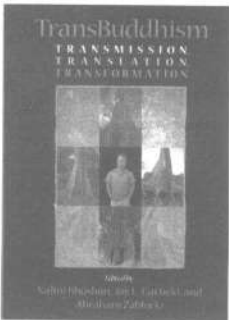
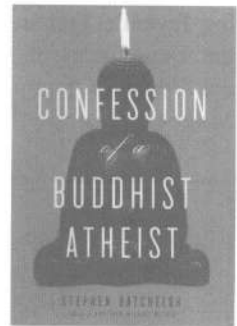
Freedom of Expression on Trial in China
 Editor: Sharon Hom, Mi Ling Tsui
 Published by Human Rights in China



Collection of Essays on Asian Design Culture
 Edited by William S. W Lim
 Published in 2009 by AA Asia

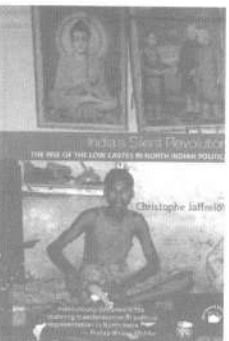
Confession of a Buddhist Atheist

By Stephen Batchelor
 First Edition, 2010
 Published by Spiegel & Grau



TransBuddhism
 Edited by Nalini Bhushan, Jay L. Garfield,
 and Abraham Zablocki,
 Published by University of Massachusetts Press,
 2009

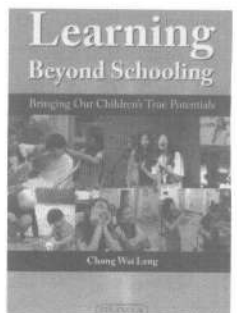
Dangerous Crossing: Conditions Impacting the Flight of Tibetan Refugees 2009 Update
 A Report by the International Campaign for Tibet
 June 2010

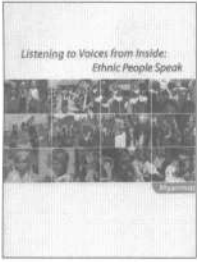


India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics
 By Christophe Jaffrelot
 Published by Permanent Black
 First published in 2003

Learning Beyond Schooling: Bringing Out Children's True Potentials

By Chong Wai Leng
 Published by Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd., in 2008





**Listening to Voices from Inside:
Ethnic People Speak**
By The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies,
June 2010



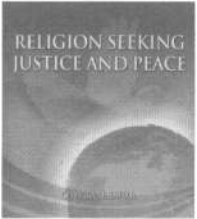
**Listening to Voices from Inside:
Myanmar Civil Society's Response to Cyclone Nargis**
Publication funded by Trocaire,
amongst other funding partners



My Struggle for Freedom
By Hans Kung
Translated by John Bowden
Published by Continuum in 2003



Our Only Choice
By Haiyun Jimeng
Translated by Ven. Sakya Longyen
Published by Kongting Publishing Company Ltd.



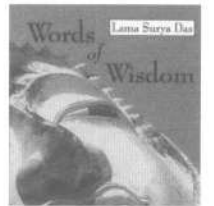
Religion Seeking Justice and Peace
By Chandra Muzaffar
Published by Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2010



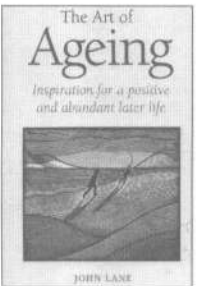
Skill in Questions
By Thanissaro Bhikku
Printed in the United States of America in 2010



**Solving Climate Change:
Transforming International Politics**
By John M. Bunzl
Published by International Simultaneous
Policy Organisation, 2010



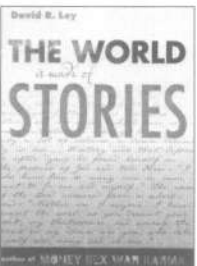
Words of Wisdom
By Lama Surya Das
Published by Koa Books, 2008



**The Art of Ageing:
Inspiration for a Positive and Abundant Later Life**
By John Lane
Published in 2010 by Green Books Ltd.



**Theravada Buddhism:
Origin, Identity and Development**
Conference Volume
Papers presented at the 2nd Conference of the Association of Theravada
Buddhist Universities Published by Mahamakut Buddhist University



The World Is Made of Stories
By David R. Loy
Published by Wisdom Publications in 2010



Together We Are One
By Thich Nhat Hanh
Published by DMG Books
First Edition, October 2010

Three Leading Buddhist Masters

Mahayana Tradition



Thich Nhat Hanh
(October 11, 1926)

The Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh who gave the name *Seeds of Peace* to this journal

Theravada Tradition



Phra Bhamagunabhorn
(January 12, 1938)

The Venerable Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto at the age of 72, or six cycles, is regarded as very auspicious.

Vajrayana Tradition



Samdhong Rinpoche
(November 5, 1939)

The Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche will leave the office of Tibetan Prime Minister in exile in March. May he spend the remaining years of his life to guide all sentient beings in peace and happiness.